

LEAVING THE BRIDGE, PASSING THE SHELTERS:  
UNDERSTANDING HOMELESS ACTIVISM THROUGH THE  
UTILIZATION OF SPACES WITHIN THE CENTRAL PUBLIC  
LIBRARY AND THE IUPUI LIBRARY IN INDIANAPOLIS

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## **DEDICATION**

To my beloved parents, Surahman and Trimah Surahman,

and my wife and our son, Fitri and Alif

To Slamet Wiguno

in memoriam

To my homeless friends, the managers and staffs in the central public library, in the shelters, and in the service providers' offices, thank for giving me a lot of inspiration and providing me the opportunity to learn about the issue of homelessness in Indianapolis

for the last two years

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Finally, I want to thank my family, especially my wife Fitri and our little one Alif who tirelessly encouraged me with love, support and understanding since they joined me in Indianapolis last spring. Their coming made my daily life in Indianapolis more colorful even though my wife had lost her father a couple of months after she came here. Losing our beloved father, Slamet Wiguno, during my study abroad had left the unavoidable side effects, especially for my wife who has been longing to see her mother, Ponirah, for more than one year. Thank you for accompanying me on this adventure, I look forward to our next one in Europe. For Bapak Slamet in heaven, I owe a great debt of gratitude for your exhortation and endless moral support. Last but not least, words cannot express my gratitude for my father Surahman, my mother Trimah Surahman, and my brother Mufid and Zaenal, for their continuous prayers support and for everything they have done for me.

Karim

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By definition, homelessness refers to general understanding of people without a home or a roof over their heads. As consequences of a number of factors, homelessness has become a serious problem especially in cities throughout the United States. Homeless people are usually most visible on the streets and in settings like shelters due to the fact that their presences and activities in public spaces are considered illegal or at least “unwanted” by city officials and by members of the public. In response to this issue, activists throughout the country have worked tirelessly on behalf of homeless people to demand policy changes, an effort that resulted in the passage of the homeless bill of rights in three states, namely Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Illinois. As I discovered through my fieldwork, in Indiana, the homeless, themselves, are currently lobbying for passage of a similar measure.

Locating my fieldwork on homelessness in Indianapolis in two sites, the Indianapolis Marion County Public Library (the Central Library) and the IUPUI Library, I examine the use of library buildings as alternative temporary shelters and spaces where the homeless can organize for political change. As an Indonesian ethnographer, I utilized an ethnographic approach, which helped me to reveal “Western values” and “American culture” as they play out in the context of homelessness. In this thesis, I show that there is a multi-sited configuration made up of issues, agents, institutions, and policy processes that converge in the context of the use of library buildings by the homeless.

Finally, I conclude that public libraries and university libraries as well can play a more important role beyond their original functions by undertaking tangible actions, efforts, engagements, and interventions to act as allies to the homeless, who are among their most steadfast constituencies. By utilizing public university library facilities, the homeless are also finding their voices to call for justice, for better treatment, and for policies that can help ameliorate the hardship and disadvantages of homelessness.

Susan B. Hyatt PhD, Chair

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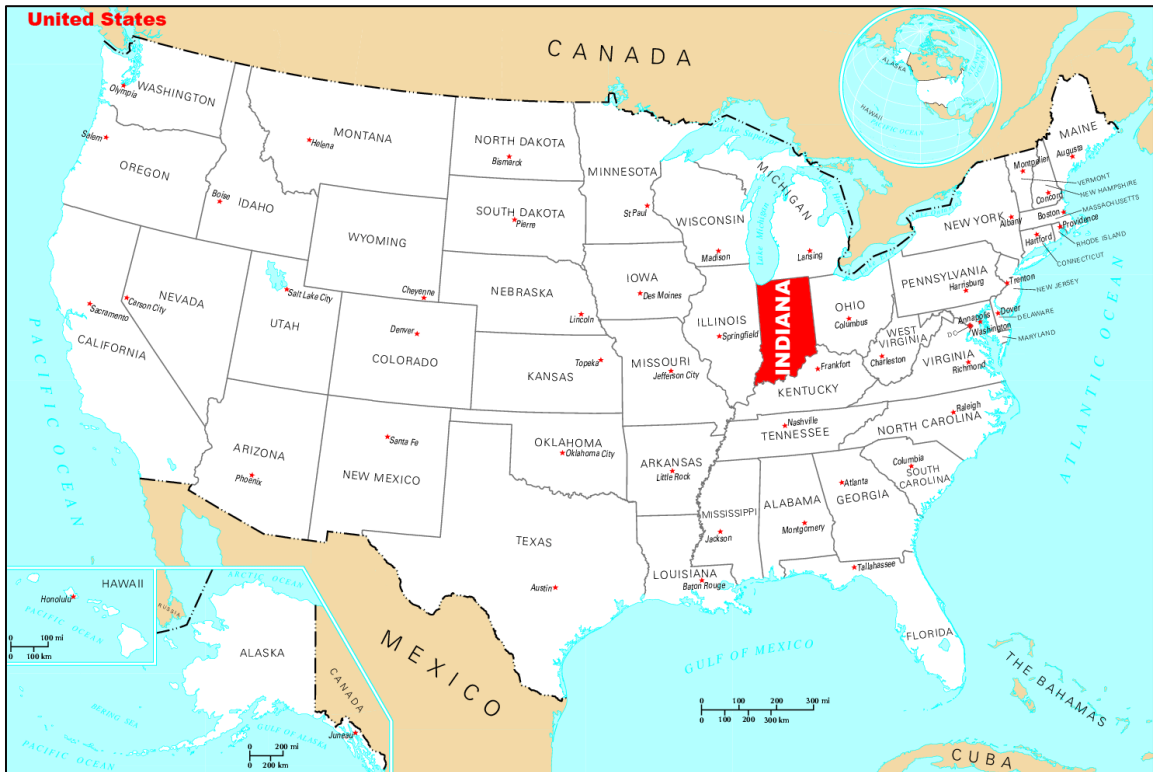
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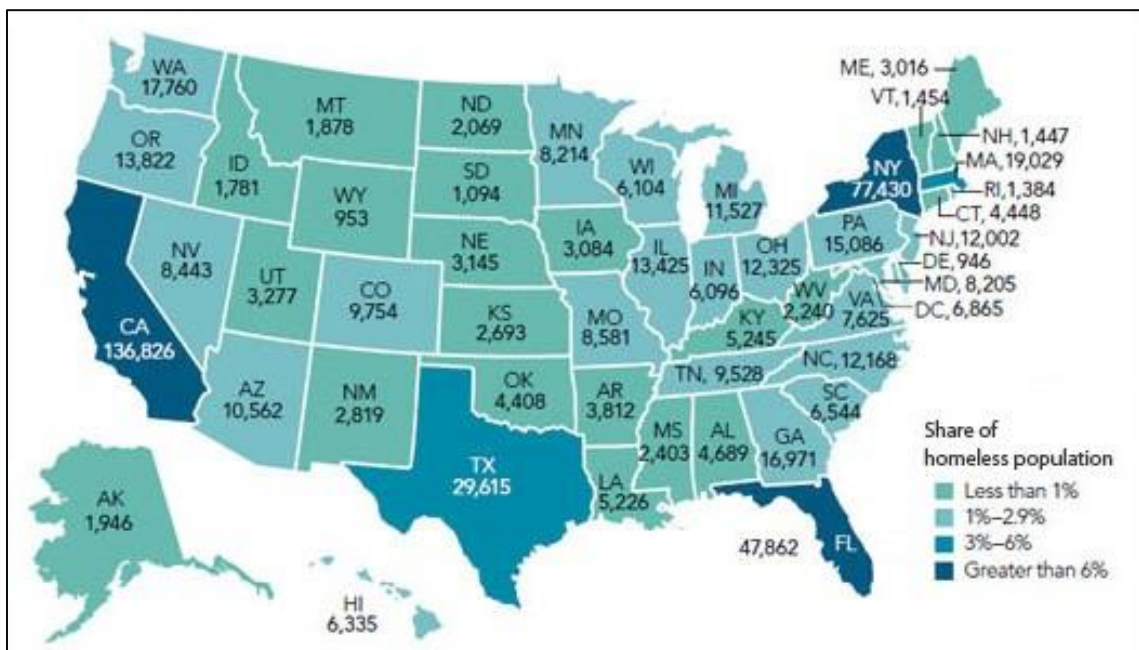
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Map 1. The United States and the State of Indiana



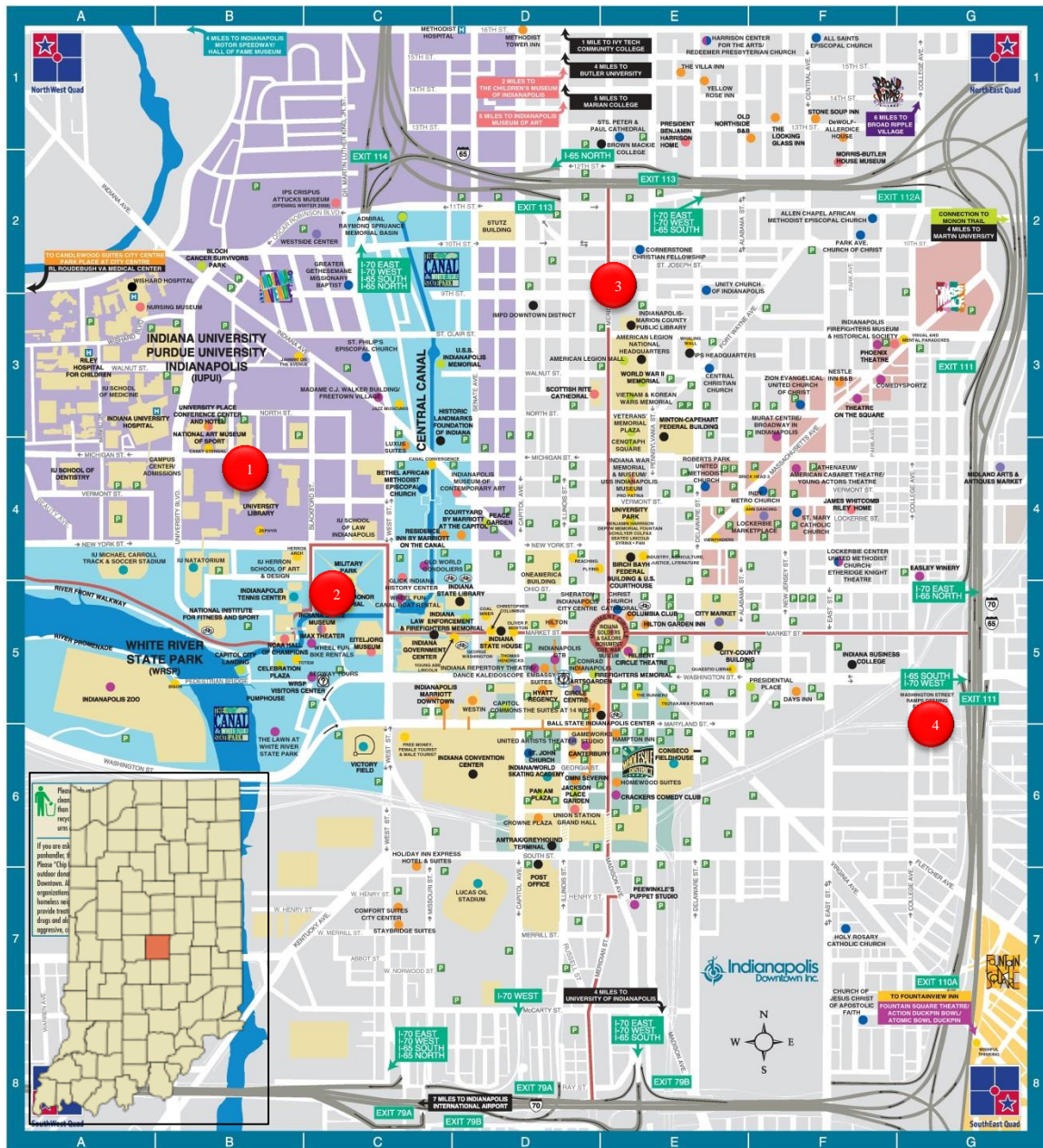
Source: [http://mapsof.net/uploads/static-maps/where\\_is\\_indiana\\_located.png](http://mapsof.net/uploads/static-maps/where_is_indiana_located.png)

Map 2. Estimates of Homeless Population in the United States by State, 2013



Source: <https://www.onecpd.info/resources/documents/AHAR-2013-Part1.pdf>

Map 3. The City of Indianapolis



Note: The three red dots: the IUPUI Library (1), the Military Park (2) the Central Library (3), the ex-Irish Hill Homeless Camp (4). (Source of the map: <https://www.docstoc.com/pass?docId=88290188&print=1>)

## ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMINOLOGIES

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana
ALA	American Library Association
ARC	adult recovery center
<i>bapak</i>	father
<i>buskers</i>	a term that is commonly used in the United Kingdom to refer to any street musician, homeless or not
CHIP	the Coalition on Homelessness Intervention and Prevention
CoC	Continuum of Care
Cultural Trail	Indianapolis bike system
DOC	Department of Correction
FSCS	Federal State Cooperative System
GED	General Educational Development
<i>gepeng</i>	an Indonesian term for pahandlers
<i>gelandangan</i>	a common Indonesian term of homeless people
HIP	Homeless Initiative Program
HUD	the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
HVAF	Hoosier Veterans Assistance Foundation Indianapolis
IFC	Intellectual Freedom Committee
IMCPL	Indianapolis Marion County Public Library (the Central Library)
IMPD	Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department
IUPUI	Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
<i>kampung</i>	village of rural area in Indonesia



<i>mushala</i>	an islamic prayer room or a place uses to perform shalat but it is not a mosque
NAEH	National Alliance to End Homelessness
NCH	National Coalition for Homeless
NLCHP	National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty
<i>panhandler</i>	a term that is officially used by the police and city officials to label the homeless on the street
<i>pengemis</i>	beggars
PPI	Public Policy Institute at Indiana University
<i>ramadhan</i>	a month of fasting for Muslims
<i>reversed gaze</i>	the study of Western culture by anthropologists from formerly colonized countries
SfAA	Society for Applied Anthropology
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SPIRIT	Scholarship Program for Strengthening the Reforming Institution
<i>tunanetra</i>	<i>buta</i> [blind]
<i>tunarungu</i>	<i>tuli</i> [deaf]
<i>tunasusila</i>	<i>pelacur</i> [prostitute]
<i>tunawicara</i>	<i>bisu</i> [mute]
<i>tunawisma</i>	<i>official Indonesian term for homeless</i>

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

I embarked on this thesis project with curiosity about how homeless people, whom I simply define as “people without home,” create their own space to call “home”. In this regard, it is important to understand that a notion of “less” or “without” may lead to a fundamental shift in the ways we see something or somebody in the context of space and time. Therefore, to think of a homeless person as actually being without a home may be a misperception or at least a limited perception of homelessness. As Koegel *et al.* (1990) and Ruddick (1990) (as cited in Valado 2006: 14) point out, homeless people develop ways as active agents to adapt to hostile urban environments by constantly reevaluating and reorganizing their use of urban space. Considering this idea, I became interested in analyzing how homeless people in Indianapolis, Indiana, utilize spaces in library buildings not only for temporary “shelters,” but also as zones or points of departure for their activism aimed toward gaining better treatment for their existence. In this thesis, I describe and analyze a homeless activism that was initiated and organized by the homeless, themselves, as a consequence of the city laws, rules, and policies that resulted from what I call the “shelters dilemma” and that led to the eviction in late summer of 2013 of residents living under the Davidson Street bridge, which, at the time, was the largest homeless camp in Indianapolis.

I relate this discussion about homeless activism to the notion of “us” versus “others” in anthropology. In a broader context, this notion can be seen in the relationship between homeless people on one side and the service providers, agencies, and city officials on the other side. It is also, however, a matter of what Boas (1887) calls cultural relativism or, in this context, “who is right” and “who is wrong” about homelessness and who has

more responsibility as well as the authority to solve the problems. In themselves these are difficult issues, but the fact that I am an Indonesian ethnographer studying American culture really complicates my understanding about public spaces, public policies, and activism in urban landscapes.

### **1.1 Exploring and Trying to Understand a New Culture Anthropologically**

This thesis project, as much as anything, is a part of my personal journey as an Indonesian ethnographer exploring American culture from the perspective of people from the East. Although it may seem irrelevant to some, my adjustment to American culture, including the reasons why I chose to come to Indianapolis, influences my view of homelessness in the city.

I am a MotoGP lover. I read Italian motorcycle racer and multiple MotoGP World Championship winners. Valentino Rossi's (2006) autobiography *What If I Had Never Tried It* and the philosophy expressed in his book title became one of my motivations in choosing the *Indy 500* state as a site for my anthropological training. I began my graduate study with a spirit of "you can make it if you try". I arrived at Indianapolis International Airport around 10:00 pm, on the last flight from New York after having endured a 36-hour flight from Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, to begin my journey as a graduate student in Anthropology at a university in the American Midwest, one that may have the longest name of any institution of higher learning: Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). It was a Sunday night, the last day before the university's orientation program, and I had no idea where to sleep except in a hotel because all the apartments listed on the Campus Housing Program were fully booked. Luckily, there was a junior student from Pakistan whose contact number was posted on the IUPUI

International Student Orientation Fall 2012 Facebook page. He allowed me to stay in his apartment for two weeks until I found a place to stay.

This disorganized plan was caused by a “yellow paper” I got from the Embassy of the United States in Jakarta, meaning that my student visa application required additional administrative processing without any definitive information on how long it would take to be approved or rejected. I then also realized, as someone who was working in the embassy told me, that my Arabic name “Karim” was the main reason and it was even more unfortunate because I do not have an official first name.

I did online research to find a relationship between the “yellow paper” and my name “Karim” on the internet and was surprised when I found a name Rajib Karim, who was a terrorist working as an IT specialist at the British Airways. Anderson (2013: 24) mentions that Najib Karim is closely connected to Anwar Al-Awlaki (a Yemen-based cleric known as “bin Laden of the internet” for his role as a senior al-Qaida recruiter and radicalizer) who was sentenced to 30 years’ imprisonment in 2011 for a variety of terrorist offenses.

I finally got my F1 visa only one day before the flight I had booked a couple of weeks earlier, and at every transit point where my flight landed, including Singapore, Frankfurt and New York, I always had to deal with additional security screenings. It was during the month of *Ramadhan*. I tried to keep up my fasting but I found that I could not do that because of having to wait in such a long line for security clearance in John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. I was lucky to be interviewed by a Muslim Moroccan American police officer, who did not ask me many questions and who then

showed me what we call *Mushala*, which is a small prayer space for Muslims, located in a corner of the airport.

Those experiences teased my sensitivity as an anthropology student regarding the notion of *cultural relativism* as one of the anthropology's core concepts. I also thought about the legacy of Franz Boas and about how outraged he would be about someone being detained solely because of his name. From this point on, I started looking for an issue or a case study that would allow me to explore the principle of "different culture, different values." In this context, the fact that anthropology is a concept, science, and "product" of Western civilization on how to see "other" societies was letting me to think about the notion of what Ntarangwi (2010) calls "*reversed gaze*" by which he means the study of Western culture by anthropologists from formerly colonized countries.

In those regards, I was interested in the issue of poverty from the very beginning of my study and curious about the simple question of why America, as a super power country, still has so many poor people. I was also inspired by my academic advisor, Professor Susan B. Hyatt, who uses ethnography and activism on behalf of poor people as tools to fight against inequality. Lyon-Callo and Hyatt (2003) first turned to describing a campaign that took place in a neighborhood in Southwest Chicago where Hyatt was employed as a community organizer in the 1980s.

I was also troubled by the concept of the *culture of poverty*, an idea that was proposed by a prominent American anthropologist, Oscar Lewis (1959), who argued that the poor are not simply lacking resources, but that they have also acquired a poverty-perpetuating value system. This concept allows policy makers and others to blame the problems of poverty upon the poor, attributing to them a "faulty" culture. Stack (1974: 23),

for example, criticizes the culture of poverty as a “fatalistic” notion which does not describe the poor so much as it serves the interests of the rich. More recently, Small *et al.* (2010) offer an interesting perspective in rejecting the idea that people’s poverty can be explained as a consequence of their “bad” values, pointing out that it is often problematic to divide explanations into “structural” and “cultural” causes because of the increasingly questionable utility of this old distinction.

Therefore, I became interested in learning how homeless people, as the poorest of the poor in the United States, but especially in the downtown area of Indianapolis, are facing conditions brought about by *structural violence*, a term originally introduced by Johan Galtung (1969). Structural violence refers to a form of violence where some social structure or social institution may harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs, and they are left out of any benefits of current socio-economic policies and economic development plans. In other words, as Paul Farmer (2004) has also noted, structural violence can also be considered as one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm’s way. Moreover, I was also curious about how homeless people adapt and organize themselves in response to those challenges.

## **1.2 Observing and Trying to Understand Homelessness in Downtown Indianapolis**

The IUPUI campus is located very close to the downtown area, and some homeless people often use its facilities in the IUPUI Library (figure 1.1) and the Campus Center. This enabled me to conduct observations of the homeless frequently. The term ‘downtown’ became a new vocabulary word that I had almost never used in my daily life before I came to the United States as a graduate student. Downtown Indianapolis, the heart of the State of Indiana, has its own uniqueness including a diversity of attractive sites,

museums, and restaurants well beyond my expectations. Based on the website *Livability.com* (2011), Indianapolis has one of the best downtowns in the United States as indicated by an interesting quote which reads “the city that will give you the big-city experience minus the actual big city”. Unlike New York City, Chicago, or Washington DC, three other cities I have visited, which are all characterized by a fast rhythm of life, large crowds, and a very high cost of living, Indianapolis offers a cheaper cost of living and a relatively comfortable and quiet urban experience, including amazing bike routes created by the Indianapolis’ recently constructed and privately funded Cultural Trail System.



Figure 1.1 The IUPUI Library (photo by Karim, spring 2014)

The jaw-dropping 284 feet tall Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Monument Circle marks the center of the Mile Square grid of the downtown. A few blocks north of Monument Circle there are fabulous, sequential public spaces, starting with the wide open area of University Park, Indiana War memorial Plaza, Veterans Memorial Plaza, American Legion Mall, and ending up at the magnificent Indianapolis Central Public Library (figure

1.2). These icons convinced me to explore and learn more about the greater Indianapolis metropolitan area which include the surrounding “donut” counties that center on Indianapolis.



Figure 1.2 The Central Library and its front view from the 6th floor (the University Park, the Indiana War Memorial Plaza, Veterans Memorial Plaza, and American Legion Mall of Downtown Indianapolis) (photos by Karim, winter 2013)

However, behind the grander stories of Indianapolis, there is an unpleasant fact about homelessness that really troubled my mind and touched my sensitivity as the “other” thinking about American life and culture. Joan Harvey, one my informants who is a senior staff member in the Central Library, revealed that 40-50% of the Central Library’s visitors,



especially during the winter, are the homeless. The issue of homelessness was contrary to what I was imagining about the situation of a metropolitan city in the United States.

Mansur, *et al.* (2002) note that for the last several decades, metropolitan cities throughout the country have experienced sustained increases in the numbers of visibly homeless and in the numbers of individuals seeking temporary shelter in public and privately-run facilities.

From my point of view, homelessness and the experience of homelessness can also be defined or understood in different cultural contexts. For example, how American people see the homeless is another interesting point. The American Oxford Dictionary (2005) defines a term “homeless” as (a person) without a home, and who therefore is typically living on the streets. In my understanding, there are two Indonesian terms for homeless. The first term is *gelandangan*, which is a common term, used in daily conversations meaning someone who is going or walking aimlessly from one place to another.

The second term is *tunawisma*, which is a relatively new word adopted from the Javanese word *tuna* (no, loss) and *wisma* (home, building) and mostly used in more formal or academic circumstances. The ameliorative process from *gelandangan* to *tunawisma* is common in Indonesian language, and has also been applied to other terms meaning “lack of something”, such as *tuli* (deaf), which became *tunarungu* (no hearing); *buta* (blind), which became *tunanetra* (no vision); *bisu* (mute) became *tunawicara* (no voice), and *pelacur* (slut or prostitute) became *tunasusila* (no moral, immoral). The term *gelandangan* can also be found in a book entitled *The Encyclopedia of Homelessness* edited by an American anthropologist, David Levinson. Levinson (2004: 308) notes that an Indonesian

term used to describe homelessness is *gelandangan*, which has the same meaning and condition as the English word “tramp”.

Moreover, the term *gelandangan* is often used in combination with *pengemis* (“beggar”) in one word *gepeng* that has been coined and used in the context of operations to remove them from the streets. It has nothing to do with “home” because most of the Indonesian *gepengs* have a home in their *kampung* (rural areas), and as a result of urbanization, many of them have moved to the cities in order to find a better life. When this attempt fails, sadly, they then end up living on the streets. They often feel reluctant to go back to their villages before they have managed to succeed in the cities because in many cases they owe money to their relatives and neighbors which was loaned to them as an initial accommodation and transportation fee.

One thing that I saw (figure 1.3), a clear and unique difference between the homeless in Indianapolis and in Jakarta, is that in Jakarta there are many homeless women and children because people are emotionally willing to give money to these family groups. Many of them panhandle without holding a “homeless” sign right on the street around the traffic lights, instead of in the pedestrian areas, as I saw in Indianapolis. Because of warmer weather in Jakarta but also for cultural reasons, people who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds are not used to wearing shoes, so almost none of them who live on the street do so, something that I have never seen in Indianapolis. Considering the difference in geographic locations, socio-economic conditions, and cultural situations, these are only a few examples of differences, but there are probably many others.



Figure 1.3 The face of homelessness (*gepeng*) in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia (photos by Kompas 2013, Roni 2011, Ivan 2000, Okezon 2010)

My initial academic engagement with the issue of homelessness in Indianapolis began with a project in the methodology class I took at the IUPUI School of Public Health in the spring of 2013. My project focused on the issue of homeless families because even though I could not find even one homeless child on the streets, the Indianapolis Homeless Count 2012 had recorded 315 children (which in 2013 increased to 328), who were in families without permanent housing and 15 children in families who were chronically homeless. Beginning with this project, I began doing volunteer work in two different homeless family shelters in Indianapolis, the Dayspring Center and the Holly Family

Shelter. My jobs were mostly dealing with children in the Children's Service Room and other kids-related activities including a six-week summer camp program in Dayspring Center during the summer of 2013 (figure 1.4). I also attended various meetings and events related to homelessness organized by different organizations such as feeding programs, fundraisers (figure 1.5), seminars, and discussions (figure 1.6) about homelessness.



Figure 1.4 Summer Camp for Homeless Children organized by one of the homeless family shelters in Indianapolis (photo by Karim, 2013)



Figure 1.5 The Annual Homeward Bound Fun Walk and fundraising program held in Downtown Indianapolis, April 11, 2014 (photo by Karim, 2014)





Figure 1.6 The Annual *Summer Ice Cream with the Homeless* held by Hoosier Veterans Assistance Foundation (HVAF) Indianapolis (photo by Karim, 2013)

Around the same time, my wife and my three-year-old son joined me to experience American life. Since then, by accompanying them to the Central Library at least once or twice a week, I was able to see dozens of homeless people sitting or lying down inside the library building, on the sidewalks, on park benches, under the trees, and in bus shelters around the Central Library areas.

Every Saturday in the second and fourth week of each month, the number of homeless people hanging around the Central Library increases due to the free meals and other necessities distributed by Hope for Tomorrow Ministry, one of several faith-based organizations that focuses on helping the homeless. Inside the six-story library building, homeless people can be seen on each floor, particularly on the third to six floors where computers are available. There is also a specific Service Room in the corner of the third floor usually used by the library's management and outreach team of the organizations that focus on the issue of homelessness. On the right side of this room, there is also a small language lab that can be used by anybody who wants to learn English (figure 1.7).

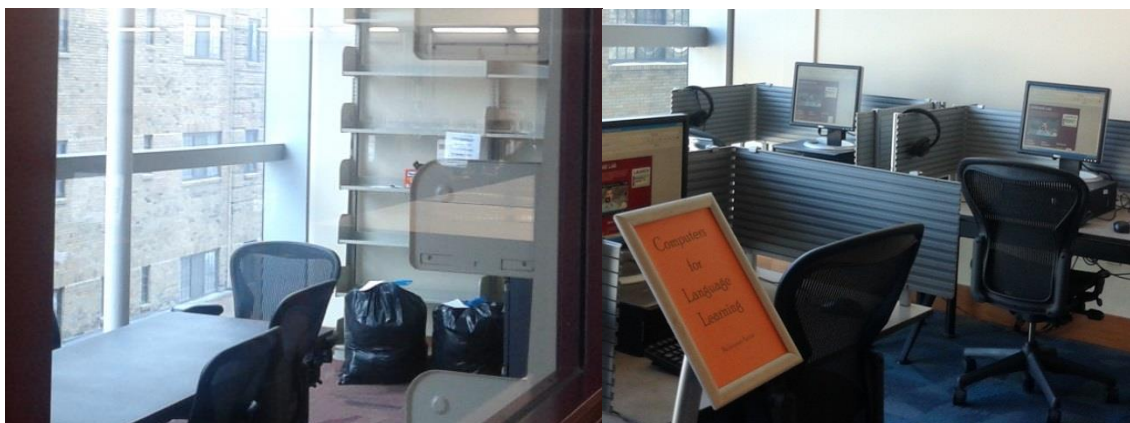


Figure 1.7 The Service Room and Language Lab on the 3rd floor of the Central Library (photos by Karim, 2014)

Furthermore, since 2007, The Coalition on Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (CHIP), in cooperation with Indiana University Public Policy Institute (PPI), has conducted the Point-in-Time Homeless Count in Marion County. This citywide count of homeless people reveals that Indianapolis has experienced sustained increases in the numbers of visibly homeless and in the numbers of individuals seeking temporary shelter in both public and privately-run facilities. Although a Point-in-Time count like this one does not provide the total number of people experiencing homelessness during the course of a year, the national research suggests that an estimation of the total number who experience homelessness at some point during the year is three to five times the number identified during the count in January 2013 (Rice and Littlepage 2013: 1).

According to the 2013 Point-in-Time Count, an estimate of 4,800 to 8,000 individuals in Marion County experienced homelessness during the year. Based on my interview with Lesley White, the executive director of the Homeless Initiative Program (HIP), this count has been considered as a crucial source of updated information about the face and trend of homelessness that is widely used by service providers, policy makers, researchers, and community funders as basic information for improving the effectiveness

of services, identifying the service gaps, and carrying out further strategic planning for this population.

Moreover, funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc. and the United Way of Central Indiana, in cooperation with various organizations that provide services for the homeless, Indianapolis has a community plan document to address homelessness called the *Blueprint Indianapolis Continuum of Care (CoC)*. The CoC document is required by the federal government for the city to continue getting money from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to combat poverty, homelessness, and other social problems. The second edition of the document, the *2013-2018 Blueprint Indianapolis Continuum of Care: Making Homelessness Rare, Short-Lived, and Recoverable* underlines the fact that one of the most alarming trends of homelessness in Indianapolis that has concerned policy makers is that the number of individuals experiencing homelessness is growing rapidly, both in the shelters and on the street. At the same time, the number of beds available for them has remained relatively constant.

Trying to identify the main factors that cause homeless is one of the major foci of research about homelessness in Indianapolis and throughout the country (Gorder 1988, Jencks 1994, Gerdes 2007). Others have focused on shelter issues (Sutherland and Locke 1936, Hoch and Slayton 1989, Lyon-Callo 2004); on alcohol and drug abuse and addiction (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009); on finding the gaps between homeless people and the service providers; and on finding the best solutions for reducing or ending homelessness. Hersberger (2003) found that homeless people often have small, unstable social networks, low levels of education, and few employable skills. In Indianapolis beginning on 2007, Larry Zimmerman and his former students, Jessica Welch and Courtney Singleton have

conducted interesting ethnographic and archaeological work as part of their project on “the archaeology of homelessness”. They reveal that the presence of homeless people on the landscape is mostly short term, usually in response to a wide range of variables from police to changing social programs (Zimmerman and Welch 2011; Zimmerman, Singleton and Welch 2010).

Homeless people, who live on the streets and campsites often face evictions by city officials, which means that public libraries, in many cases, have become one of the few indoor public spaces for homeless men who want to be alone (McKendry 2013:151). The lack of public restrooms, the “anti-homeless” design of outdoor public facilities, such as city parks and bus stop benches, and the threat of eviction from city officials have led to large numbers of homeless people staying in the public library. Moreover, in his dissertation Hersberger (1998) found that public libraries offer library services and Internet access which helps to bridge the “digital divide”, although information-seeking remains more challenging for stigmatized and marginalized people. With unsettled lives, homeless people often experience isolation and alienation as a result of their diminished social networks (Chatman 1996; Hersberger 2003).

### **1.3 A Turning Point: The Eviction of the Irish Hill Homeless Camp**

The Irish Hill homeless camp, once the biggest campsite in Indianapolis, was located around the area under the CSX railroad tracks at the corner of South Davidson and East Maryland Streets. Once “home” to 67 people, city officials evicted the residents in late summer of 2013. On a morning at the beginning of April, 2014, more than six months after the eviction as temperatures outside were getting warmer, I visited the site to see if there were any new developments or renovations of the railroad bridges that had been



done, as those were the reasons that had been given to justify forcing the homeless out of the camp. What I saw there was nothing except fresh human feces, vodka and other alcohol bottles, plastic bags, and personal belongings scattered on some spots outside the fenced area of the two street bridges. Some homeless people still have a sense of belonging to their former “home” and still use that area as a place to stay during the night. Looking into the history of the place suggests that this is not surprising because the site apparently has a long association with homeless people.

I have not been able to trace where the name of Irish Hill came from and who the first residents of the camp were. However, a YouTube video entitled *A History of Irish Hill*, uploaded by “indystpatsvideos” in March 3, 2011, asserts that Irish Hill is the name of the neighborhood. Moreover, based on records from the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission, Steve Campbell (2011) notes that the history of Davidson Street can be attributed to the name of Governor Noah Noble. As the fourth governor of Indiana, he was a major landowner in early Indianapolis and owned much of the land that now encompasses the Near Eastside area near downtown. Dorman Street was named after Gov. Noble’s grandson, Dorman Davidson who was born in October 26, 1841, of his mother Catherine Noble Davidson. In November 1865, the Davidson family platted the area bounded by the railroad on the west, St. Clair Street on the north, Oriental Street on the east, and Michigan Street on the south as “Davidson’s Heirs’ Second Addition” and “P.A. Davidson’s Addition”, named for Preston A. Davidson.

The property, two main areas at Davidson and Maryland streets and under a CSX train viaduct just east of Downtown Indianapolis that belongs to the city and CSX, has been a homeless campsite for a long period of time and is not a new phenomenon in this

location. Larry, whom I met him on my first visit to this area in October 2013, was born and raised in the neighborhood near the bridge. He told me that the bridge cannot be separated from a long history of homeless people in Indianapolis. He is 28 years old and claimed that homeless people have occupied these two locations since he was child. Furthermore, he said that one of the reasons why the police are always trying to shut down the camp is that it was very bad for the businesses around the bridge areas including a nice, well known Italian restaurant that lost its customers because they were afraid to pass by the homeless camp. Melissa, one of my informants from Horizon House said:

“That specific camp, they [homeless people] came from the railroad. If you see the bridge, it’s crumbling, so the railroad needs to do repair on that bridge, but they couldn’t do that because there were more than 60 people living under there.”

This particular campsite has raised concerns from various organizations and interest groups. Melissa confirmed that this particular campsite was the biggest homeless camp in Indianapolis that is very close to the downtown. As she said, some of the main problems that had raised serious concerns from the neighborhood around the bridge area were that there was no public rest room and it became a place with a lot of violence, prostitution, and substance abuse. It was an area with complicated issues. Lesley, another informant from Homeless Initiative Program (HIP) argued:

“...the larger concern was because so many people were living there. It’s pretty close to the services, showers, food pantry, and laundry facilities; that has a lot to do with it. A lot of agencies have worked together to find the best solution and to get people housed. [Since the eviction], many of the folks were scattered and moved to different camps around the city; some of them were housed. We had lost contact with some of the folks, but I am sure many of them are still in the city.”

Melissa commented that it also became a popular hub for the homeless people:

“...[I]t’s a popular spot, it’s close to the train station, and it’s close to downtown. It was a fire there that jeopardized the bridge and they [city officials] closed it, but a couple years’ later [homeless] people moved back in. It was an

eviction in March 2010. So, they just move from one bridge to another. Many people there were living under the Pine Street Bridge before”.

Over the last six years, supported mostly by churches around Indianapolis, there have been a wide range of activities meant to help the homeless people living under the Davidson Bridge including annual fundraisers, Christmas celebrations on the campsite, and gatherings were very well documented by video and photo (figure 1.8). The *Meet Me Under The Bridge* ministry, one of the non-profit and faith-based organizations, had been one of the most active agencies since 2005, serving the Irish Hill Homeless Camp residents with hot homemade food, water, a to-go-bag, clothing, and blankets every Sunday afternoon prior to the eviction.

Interestingly, one of my key informants, Maurice told me that *Meet Me Under The Bridge* and the Irish Hill Homeless Camp residents collaborated to host a “block party” every Sunday at the camp. All the other camps around the city would come and take part of the festivities, and many other outreach groups, mostly faith-based were involved in making this event happen every week. They also documented a wide range of activities within the campsite since 2005. In 2012, as documented by Matt Detrich (*Indystar.com 2012*), there was a glorious community Christmas celebration coordinated by the Connection Point Church (a church based in Brownsburg, Indiana), Indy Church, the Indy Love Train, and the Irish Hill outreach team from different organizations. A detail documentation of these activities can be accessed from both *Indystar* website at <http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Avis=BG&Dato=20121219&Kategori=NEWS&Lopenr=212190805&Ref=PH> and *Meet Me Under The Bridge* website at <http://www.meetmeunderthebridge.org/street-photography/>.

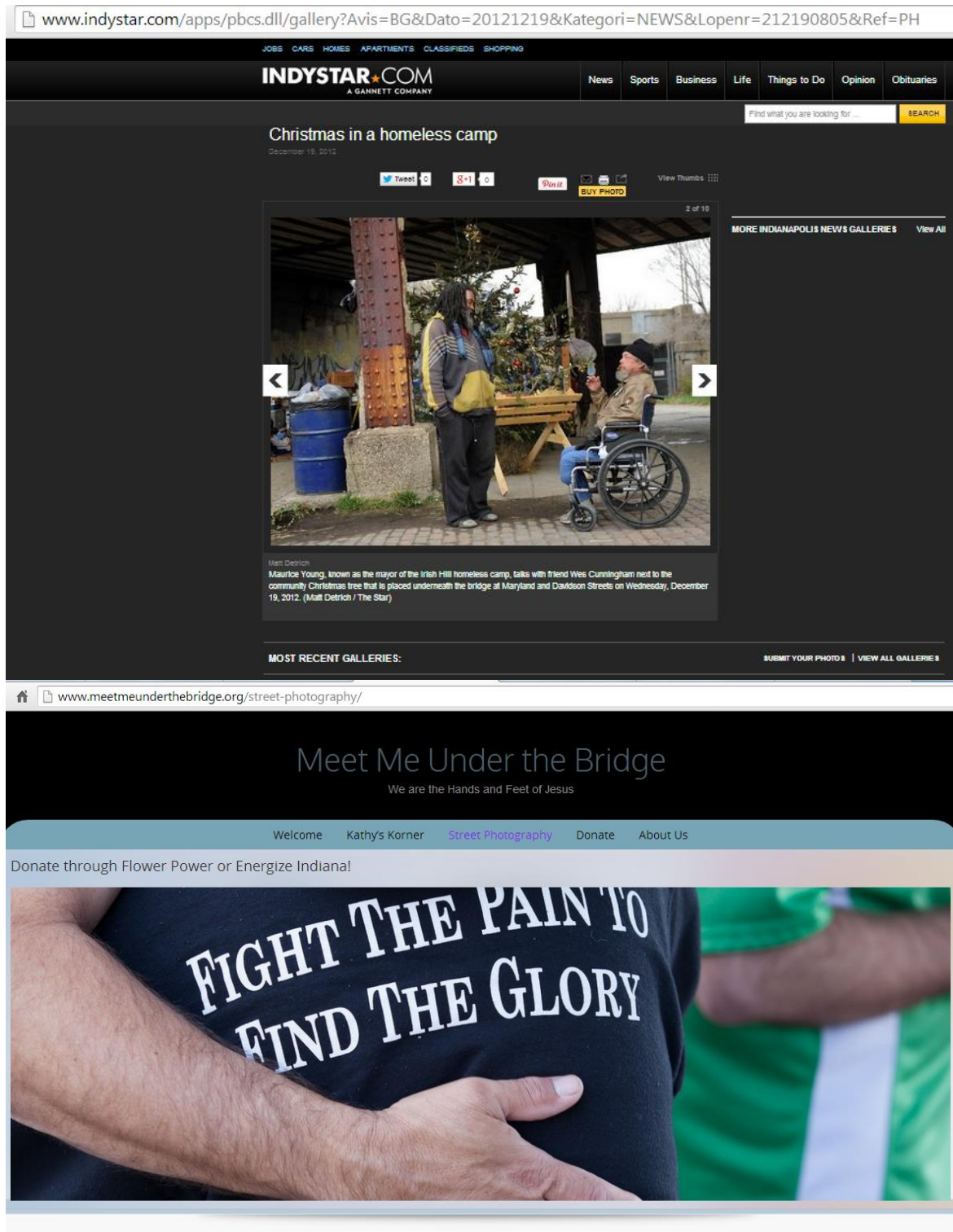


Figure 1.8 Photo galleries of the 2012 Christmas celebration and other activities prior to the eviction of the Irish Hill Homeless camp, documented by *Indystar.com* and *meetmeunderthebridge.org*

I have not been able to interview the director or staff of *Meet Me Under The Bridge* since my interview requests were not answered. However, from my research into their mission, I noticed interesting phenomena about the idea of helping homeless people. The association of ‘bridge’ with homelessness seems to be common. *Bridge Ministry* in Georgia; *Beyond The Bridge* in Portland; *The Bridge Homeless Assistance Center* in Dallas; *The Memphis Bridge* in Memphis; *Under The Bridge and On the Streets* in Los Angeles; and *Meet Me Under the Bridge* in Indianapolis are some of the names of faith-based and non-profit organizations that have the same idea and goal to “building more bridges from homelessness to hope”.

The association between bridges and homelessness has become a common idea all around the United States and throughout the world, as I also found a name *Under The Bridge* in Manchester, UK. The meaning of “bridge” is widely used in a broader context, not only as a connector, or as a “home” for the homeless, but also as a symbol and concept of a religious approach, that is “bridging people”. In the context of homelessness, there are two main missions carried out by faith-based organizations: bridging homeless people to move from being homelessness into emergency shelters or permanent housing and bringing them to God. Both missions are clearly shown by one of the stories from *Meet Me Under The Bridge*:

”We made lasting relationships with our friends. Like Shawn. We served him for a year and a half and he’d given me his phone number. Then he wasn’t showing up for a while and I called him. He was surprised that someone cared and called to see how he was doing. He’d actually gotten an apartment and was so proud that he wanted to show us. He asked if he could come and help us serve, which he did for a long time. He has since moved out of state, but calls from time to time to see how we are doing. We were able to pray with him and the following week he came back and was feeling much better. That fall he gave his life to Jesus. GLORY to GOD!!!” (*Meetmeunderthebridge.com* 2013).

In the case of the Irish Hill homeless camp in downtown Indianapolis, as revealed by both my informants from the Horizon House and HIP, some of the reasons why so many homeless people occupy street bridges, especially Davidson Street Bridge, were very rational.

First, it is close to the downtown area and train station where life's necessities can be easily accessed and the possibilities for living together as a community among the homeless were more possible. Second, there is no place more "comfortable" than a street bridge, compared to other public spaces usually used by the homeless. They both argued that Indianapolis needs more secular or non-faith-based emergency shelters to accommodate those who are not comfortable with faith-based approaches. There are also not many abandoned buildings or houses to call "home" and the service providers prohibit the homeless from occupying abandoned houses due to safety reasons.

Moreover, all the homeless service providers in Indianapolis are located in downtown area. These include but are not limited to food, showers, mail, phone, medical and dental care, computer use, case management, transportation, legal services, and clothing pantries. Regarding this situation, Maurice complained:

"This is our conflict with being chased out of downtown; how can we leave and all the services there?"

The 2013 eviction of the Irish Hill homeless camp (figure 1.9, the link of a photo documentation by *Indystar.com* can be accessed at <http://archive.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Avis=BG&Dato=20130825&Kategori=NEWS&Lopenr=308250804&Ref=PH>) was the second during the last five years. As reported by Miller (2010), on Monday, March 1, 2010, around 36 members of the homeless camp living beneath the same bridge on the eastern edge of downtown had also

been evacuated, but they came back, became a bigger population, and neglected the city's *No Trespassing* sign.

The media, city officials, and service providers offered the same justification for both evictions, which was complaints from the business owners and neighbors because of a rise in fear and crime, littering, human waste, and other issues. From the perspective of the homeless, as Maurice showed me a news article in Indianapolis Business Journal (*IBJ.Com*) titled *Herman & Kittle plans \$28M downtown apartment project* (Olson 2014), this eviction was related to the city plans for downtown redevelopment.

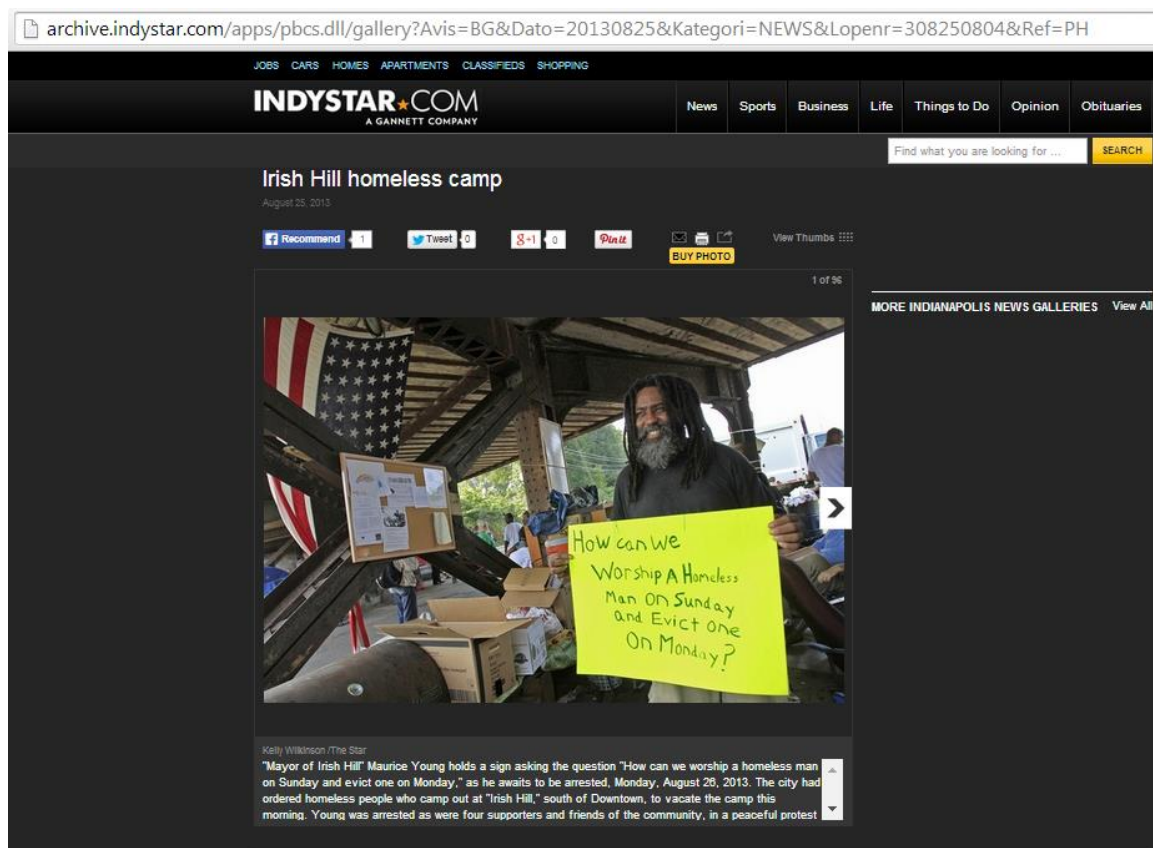


Figure 1.9 A photo gallery of the eviction of the Irish Hill Homeless camp in August 26, 2013 documented by *Indystar.com*

In the 2010 eviction, as reported by the *Indychannel.com* (2010) Mayor Greg Ballard toured the camp and instructed the city officials to close and fence off the

sidewalks beneath the bridge. It had been considered a nuisance by business owners, customers and residents for years. However, a couple of months later, it became a homeless camp again with more new residents appearing in the campsite. In August 26, 2013, the Irish Hill homeless camp was closed and its residents were finally evicted. Five people were arrested on the day of the eviction. This eviction was also complicated, as Melissa observed:

“...[T]he city has been blamed for that. Everybody wants to blame it on the city but it didn’t have anything to do with the city. The railroad needed the bridge to be repaired, and you really can’t repair the bridge if we have 67 people living under the bridge. They got plenty of notice to move and sublet a house. So, when that all happened the city took the heat for something that has nothing to do with the city.”

After the eviction (figure 1.10) the bridge area became quiet and as Melissa mentioned, many of the Irish Homeless Camp residents (27 out of the total 67 people) came to the Horizon House for meals, shower, laundry and other needs. In the media (*Indystar.com*, *Wishtv.com*, *Indianapolis Recorder*), the main reason why individuals were arrested was because they refused to leave the camp, even though the signs clearly say that it is for “construction and bridge cleaning”. According to the media, those arrested argued that the city has been harassing the homeless instead of addressing the challenges that lead to some people losing their homes. However, as Melissa said, it can be just a part of several “scenarios” that forced them to leave the camp. For whatever reasons, as she mentions, letting or tolerating them to live under the bridge for a long time with such a big population was not a good idea.





Figure 1.10 The situation in October 2013, two months after the Irish Hill homeless camp eviction (Photos by Karim 2013)

Moreover, Melissa also pointed out that the problems of homelessness are complicated. There had been a lot of planning proposed by the city and organizations that focus on the issue of homelessness to move the Irish Hill's community, but there were always many issues to be considered, such as people with mental illnesses, addictions, and alcoholism. In addition, and many of them simply would not go to the shelters. Throughout my ethnographic investigations, I have been able to interview Maurice Young, the former "Mayor" of the Irish Hill Homeless Camp. I became acquainted with him in the beginning of February 2014, through one of my key informants in the Central Library. Mr. Young told me stories of the camp eviction from the perspective of the homeless. The eviction further highlighted the challenges of being homeless, revealed some of the structural factors that create and maintain homelessness, and emphasized the importance

of events that can propel individuals into action. I refer to this phenomenon of homeless people mobilized to take action as “homeless activism.”

These stories provide different points of views about the dynamic lives of homeless people within the campsite that have never been disclosed by the organizations or agencies and the media. These include on-going system of reciprocity, complex social networks, and camp leadership. Maurice’s engagement with the homeless community had led him to become a spokesperson for homeless people. At the same time, he spoke out against the practice of what Lyon-Callo (2004) calls “homeless sheltering industry” that has led to the process of “hiding” and “erasing” the realities of homelessness from the public and from city regulations. The eviction of the Irish Hill homeless camp was a turning point for the emergence of homeless activism in Indianapolis; therefore, it was also a key moment for this research. It was not only because Maurice used this moment as a leverage to pass the Homeless Bill of Rights in Indiana, which is one of the most crucial issues related to the discussion of the structural violence faced by homeless people; it also guided me toward seeing the issue of homeless from a range of different perspectives.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

In her research on *Factors Influencing Homeless People’s Perception and Use of Urban Space* in Tucson, Arizona, Valado (2006) found that due to the fact that homeless people no longer had a place where they “belonged”, they adapted by using public spaces in unintended ways such as camping under the street bridges, sleeping in city parks, squatting in abandoned buildings, or bathing in library bathrooms. As an “outsider”, I have to struggle to understand what Malinowski and Geertz termed “the native’s point of view”, but I have an advantage in seeing aspects of culture that people in Indianapolis cannot

really see themselves. From this perspective, I hope that this project will contribute to a deeper understanding and broader awareness of the efforts to end homelessness.

The title of this project “Leaving the Bridge, Passing the Shelters: Understanding Homeless Activism through the Utilization of Spaces within the Central Public Library and the IUPUI Library in Indianapolis”, is intended to reveal the dynamic life of some homeless people and their activism was organized through the use of the library buildings. On the one hand, based on my observations, due to the fact that the Central Library is located only a couple of blocks from the Salvation Army, the Wheeler Mission Ministries and other service providers for the homeless, it has become a common and “safe” place for homeless people, used not only for their original purposes, such as learning and reading, but also for such purposes as taking a nap, lying down, or utilizing restrooms during the day. On the other hand, the IUPUI Library, which is located right across the street from Military Park (which has a gazebo that has been used by a number of homeless people for sleeping every night), is also a pleasant place for homeless people to use to compensate for their lack of sleeping time during the night, to do what they call *bird bathing*, and to produce other necessities.

Through carrying out sustained research in the Central Library and the IUPUI Library, I address the ways in which libraries are now serving as sites for providing temporary shelter and resources for homeless people. I also explore how the Central Library now is developing new programs to address the issue of homelessness by working in collaboration with other organizations whose primary missions are to reduce homelessness. Links between the two institutions in the frame of American culture has

become an interesting discourse from an anthropological perspective. Some of the key questions that I explore in this research are:

1. What rules, regulations, policies and possible reasons have shaped the experience of homelessness and the utilization of spaces in the library buildings by homeless people in Indianapolis?
2. What organizations and agencies serve and support the homeless, and in what ways does the Central Library collaborate with other related organizations to tackle the issue of homelessness in Indianapolis?
3. In what ways do homeless people create their own culture and work toward their own activism from both the campsite and the library buildings to change the rules and policies that affect them?

By utilizing ethnographic methods, I also explore the specific activities and facilities provided by the Central Library, the IUPUI Library, and the service providers for the homeless population. I investigated these issues by conducting research with the library officials and staff members, managers and staff members of the service providers and organizations that address the issue of homelessness, and with some of the homeless people who utilize the libraries' facilities and programs. Interestingly, through observations, interviews with some homeless people, and participant observations, I found that there are unique relationships between the homeless people who use the public library and those who use the IUPUI Library in the context of what I call "homeless activism".

I define homeless activism as intentional and systematic actions by the homeless with the goal of advocating changes of the existing treatments, rules and policies toward the homeless population in Indianapolis. As activism is defined as a doctrine or practice

that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue (Merriam-Webster 2004), in this project, I took a position on the side of homeless people whose voices have not been considered crucial in the process of decision-making regarding the issue of homelessness. Inspired by the founding father of American Anthropology, Franz Boas, who from the beginning of his anthropological journey challenged the scientific racism of Victorian Anthropology, I believe that in anthropology the life of every person of the world is equally important. Therefore, as Boas (1908: 9) confidently argued, it is impossible to exclude any part of mankind from the considerations of anthropology. This notion has become an important legacy in term of applying anthropology in the “real” world and, as Margaret Mead (cited in Sommers and Dineen 1984: 158) also believed, “never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.”

## **1.5 Research Methods**

At the beginning, I was planning to conduct my ethnographic research for my thesis project about the dynamic life of homeless families within the homeless family shelters where I had volunteered. However, due to the difficulty of getting access to talk with homeless parents I decided to shift my focus. My job at the shelters was dealing mostly with children’s activities; the resistance to my interviews came not from the shelter’s management but from the homeless families, themselves. I then realized the complicated issues faced by homeless families and their sense of my “otherness”, especially because my physical appearance and my English were so different from theirs. Even with the shelter’s managers and staff, conversations between them and the homeless parents almost never happened within an environment I would describe as “cozy” or, at

least, I very rarely observed such interactions during my volunteer job. As an ethnographer, my acceptance by my anticipated key informants was essential in order for me to obtain valid data, and this is the main reason why I then moved to studying the issue of homelessness in the context of the public library.

Black (1994: 425) argues that qualitative methods help us to understand the nature, strengths, and interactions of variables. As ethnographic research, this project is based on these considerations. I hope to present a provisional perspective on the ways in which the system, both in the public library and in other homeless initiative programs, operate and work together. I also hope to capture how the homeless, in their own voices, respond to these initiatives. I collected all the data and important information through key informant interviews, participant observation, and archival research.

The initial method I used in this research is observation. In order to gain a sense of “mastery of the battlefield”, observations were conducted as naturally as possible in specific locations, especially throughout the Central Library building and area around it. Because I have had plenty of time to observe homeless people around the downtown area since my methods class in spring 2013, I was able to easily recognize their physical appearance in the Central Library as well as in the IUPUI Library.

The next method I used, and this is the best way to collect data and information, was in-depth interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews with some organizations’ directors, managers and staff members who are experts about the issue of homelessness, especially with respect to the use of public libraries to help address the problem of the homeless. I conducted 21 formal interviews throughout the duration of my fieldwork. Those include seven homeless people, five in the Central Library and two I encountered in

the IUPUI Library, who were using the facility or who were participating in one of the central library's programs. There were six library personnel including a security director, a manager, two computer lab trainers, and four other staff members. From the perspectives of the service providers and agencies, I interviewed six key informants from four different agencies, namely the Homeless Initiative Program, Horizon House, Wheeler Mission, and Pour House Ministry. I also interviewed one university professor and her student separately who collaborated with one of my homeless key informants in organizing the campaign to pass the Indiana Homeless Bill of Rights. All of the interviews were conducted using an interview guide consisting of some key questions related to the topic of homelessness and tailored to the expertise of the informants.

In ethnographic research, key informant interviews play a fundamental role in capturing deeper contexts, feelings and other perceptions and insights. In finding key informants, I used snowball sampling as the primary method to recruit them. I used this method because the population under investigation was hard to approach due to the very busy schedule for those who are experts in this area. As Biernacki and Waldorf, (1981:141) have pointed out; I realized that it was also because of the sensitivity of the topic of homelessness.

Building on my relationships and established contacts with such people as one of the managers in the Central Library; the executive director and some managers in HIP; and a case manager in Horizon House, I gathered additional names and contact information for other potential informants from other organizations. The potential informants were contacted by email, telephone or in person to explain the purpose of the study. The professionals were contacted through professional networks that I tapped into. My

informants understand and are familiar with issues of homelessness in general, and specifically with the utilization of public libraries by homeless people in Indianapolis. All of my informants were above 30 and they all provided their full consent to participate. Both men and women (I could interview only one homeless woman in the Central Library) were recruited and all the interviews were conducted in English.

Participant observation was also conducted during specific events, such as the National Homeless Persons' Memorial Service, meetings, presentations, lunch, job trainings, fund raising events, and feeding programs for the homeless. Founded by the National Coalition for Homeless (NCH), National Homeless Persons Memorial Day has been annually commemorated since 1990 on December 21, the longest night of the year, in which I also participated. NCH is a national network of people who are currently experiencing or who have experienced homelessness, activists and advocates, community-based and faith-based service providers, and others committed to a single mission to prevent and end homelessness while ensuring that the immediate needs of those experiencing homelessness are met and their civil rights protected (NCH, 2013).

In Indianapolis, the Memorial Day (figure 1.11) that I attended was held in December 20 at the Christ Church Cathedral on the north side of the Monument Circle. As mentioned by the speakers of this event, it was a day of remembrance in honor of people who were homeless and more than 50 homeless people who died in 2013. Even though not many homeless people came to this event, I met one of my key informants, Michael, inside the church building.





Figure 1.11 The 2013 Homeless Persons' Memorial Service at the Christ Church Cathedral, Monument Circle Indianapolis (photo by Karim, 2013)

One of the most intensive episode of participant observation I engaged in was following Maurice's (my informant in the IUPUI Library, figure 1.12) schedule of meetings, presentations (what he called "cultural competency" presentations about homelessness), interviews, breakfast, lunch and dinner; one day I was working with him from the early opening of the library at around 8:00 am until midnight at closing time. Beginning with my first interview with him, I have been able to engage with him in different meetings and occasions with a professor in the Indiana University School of Social Work and her students, and with a professor and his students from the University of Indianapolis.

Becoming a part of his activism was a terrific experience that not only gave me a valuable, grounded knowledge and an incredible learning process, but also enriched me with a deeper understanding of the concept of "engagement" in ethnographic research.



Figure 1.12 Maurice and I in his “office” in the 3rd floor of the IUPUI Library (photo by Deana, 2013)

The interviews usually lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes, but some homeless key informants were willing to talk with me for more than two hours. The key informants who were interested in the project were asked to participate in more than one interview based on their availability and a sense of “friendship”. In ethnographic research, once we gain trust from our informants, as happened in my project with some of my informants, countless hours of discussions were easily conducted without having an interview guide. In this case, it is important to observe the same informant in different moods and situations, and to see how they compare to a group of people who have similar concerns but come with different perspectives. As Krueger (1988) points out, extended interview applies a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment.

In the Central Library, before I met and had an interview with one of the library’s managers and a senior staff, I had no idea about how to approach the homeless or to start a

conversation with them. The stereotypes about the homeless I have heard and read that stated that they are mostly mentally ill, introverted, anti-social, or even “dangerous,” had affected my feelings. Therefore, at the beginning, I tried to ask them politely by using a piece of paper with my handwriting on it. I put it on the table while saying two magical words “excuse me” to an old white guy who was sitting on the corner chair of the computer facilities in the 6th floor. I then left him with a thin smile on my lips (figure 1.13). What made me sure that he was a homeless man was because he brought something I called “homeless luggage”. About an hour after I left the message, I came back to the guy and asked him “excuse me, have you read my message sir?” and he replied, tersely, “I am sorry, I don’t want to talk or make an appointment at this moment”.

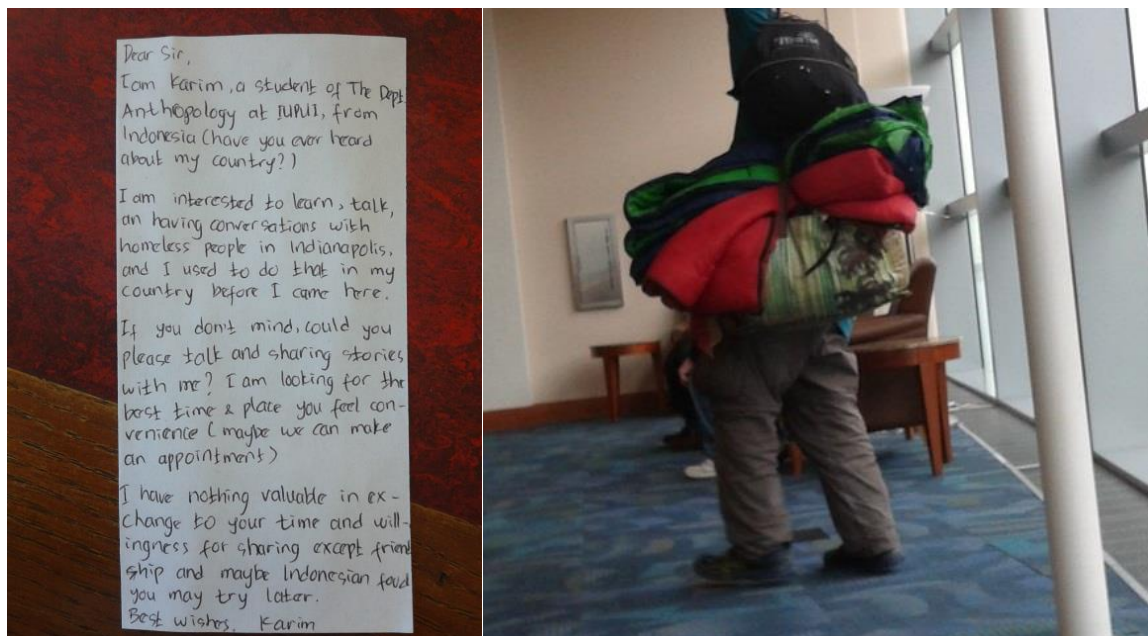


Figure 1.13 My hand written note and a homeless man with his “homeless luggage” on the 6th floor of the Central Library (photos by Karim, 2014)

Throughout my ethnographic journey, and the fact that I had to deal with my language barrier and non-native status, all of the methods I used in my thesis project were really challenging. From choosing my topic, which took a while until I got a specific issue

of homelessness in a public library, to finishing my project proposal; from getting in touch with key informants to finding effective ways for interviews; and from transcribing recorded files to looking and analyzing themes of the interviews, all these endeavors got me stuck in situations where I could only say “wait a minute!”. If Hyatt and Lyon-Callo (2003: 177) use the term “ethnography from below” in their engagement with poor people in Chicago and Massachusetts, and if Zimmerman and Welch (2011: 82) use Gadsby and Barnes’ (2008) concept of the “Archaeology of Ten Minutes Ago”, I found that my work could be called an ethnography of “wait a minute!”

Some of the examples that I considered relevant to what I call the ethnography of “wait a minute!” came during my fieldwork both in the Central Library and in the IUPUI Library. If I had not accidentally joined in a *webinar* organized by the American Library Association (ALA) titled *Extending Our Reach: Reducing Homelessness Through Library Engagement*, I would not have known about the use of the “public library as a temporary day shelter for the homeless” amidst my frustration due to my inability to do an ethnographic project in a camp site or in a homeless shelter.

More importantly, I am a first-language Indonesian speaker who has recently learned English. This was occasionally a barrier in my understanding and therefore, probably in what I thought I heard from my informants. Be aware that in the “quotations” I have errors in syntax and maybe even some key concepts, but my committee members have worked with me on them, trying to put them into more common English, to help them make better sense to readers, and to protect my informants, but also to preserve some of the style of their speech patterns. Please keep these factors in mind while you read quotations that are not precisely quotations. Also, I ask that you forgive errors, and I

especially beg forgiveness from my informants if represented their words in ways that are not entirely true to their intent. However, most of the time I believe that what you see correct in spirit, if not precise wording.

Before I met Michael, what I knew about Maurice came from "second hand resources", which included the media and service providers, telling me that: he, first, had been arrested and jailed since the eviction of the Irish Hill homeless camp; and second, that he was a part of the faith-based missions who was sent to the campsite in order to "bridge" the homeless into the "God's home". Michael is the one who told me, for the first time, the different story about Maurice. If I had not met Michael during my fieldwork, I would not have been able to come up with the idea of "homeless activism." The other challenges were about technical issues and the limitations of my research completion timeline. During my interviews, for example, when I asked a question to one of my informants, he told me long stories and descriptions. If I asked him again about something that he had already explained, he just mumbled and showed an expression of what I call a "wait a minute sign" before he tried to tell me another story. All of these situations combined with many other challenges have led me to ask myself "can I do that?", but "wait a minute", "I did it!"

## **Chapter 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

#### **2.1. Anthropology and Activism**

Scholars from a wide range of disciplines have long discussed the relationship between the academy and the “real world” or between knowledge and practice. In anthropology, the supposed dichotomy between theory and practice has led to the use of specific terms, such as public anthropology, applied anthropology, engaged anthropology and most recently activist anthropology, which has also generated “creative” modifications in terms of approaches and methodology. Hale (2006), as cited in Low and Merry (2010: 207), points out that critical engagement can best be achieved by activist research and advocacy rather than academy-based cultural critique. Therefore, I believe that activist anthropology can have political implications beyond the academy.

One of the questions that has frequently been asked—and I personally often get this kind of “skepticism” since I decided to study anthropology in my college in Indonesia—is this: Can anthropology and anthropologists have a practical impact on the lives of people or community they study? This question is even asked more loudly to anthropologists when their study is focused on indigenous people and marginalized communities such as the “endangered tribes”, the urban poor, drug abusers, immigrants, and the homeless. This project is focused on discussing the intersection of anthropology and activism in the case of homelessness.

In the context of the United States, anthropology and activism cannot be separated from the legacy of Franz Boas who initiated action against scientific racism during the late 1890s into the early 1900s. Kedia and Willigen (2005: 6) point out that the period of the Great Depression during the 1930s can be considered as a turning point when

anthropologists established anthropology as an instrumental field for addressing practical social problems. In more recent decades, some anthropologists not only use activism or examine an activist approach as their primary tool to elaborate socio-economic and political issues, but they have also become activists on behalf of people or communities they study, demanding justice or better government policies. Among those who are well-known as prominent activist anthropologists, as listed by Anderson (2010), are Paul Farmer (advocating health care and social justice for “third world” people), David H. Price (advocating racial justice), and David Rolfe Graeber (advocating for immigrant rights, occupy Wall Street movement, and co-founder of the Anti-Capitalist Convergence). In the case of homelessness, Philippe Bourgois, Jeffrey Schonberg, and Vincent Lyon-Callo are a few of the anthropologists who both productively publish their scholarly works and fully engage in organizing protests and movements demanding homeless rights.

All approaches related to activism and advocacy that have been carried out by anthropologists, as mentioned above, refer to the process of applying anthropology in the “real world”. Kedia and Willigen (2005: 16) have noted that this process is comprised of complex-related research and instrumental methods, which produce change or stability in specific cultural systems through the provision of data, initiation of direct action, and the formulation of policy. Davis (2003) uses a term “pracademicians” to explain the intersection between intellectual engagement and practical works and to explore an area that she calls “politically engaged anthropology.” Lyon-Callo and Hyatt (2003) also use this term to refer to those who engage in the process of collaborative work between activist anthropologists and community members to work toward social justice. During the 1980s, Hyatt was involved in a campaign that took place in a neighborhood in Southwest Chicago

where she was employed as a community organizer. At that time, she was not yet an anthropologist, but her experience as a community organizer led her back to anthropology to address issues of inequality and injustice. From this point, it is clear that anthropology and activism are two different things, but they can be unified to pursue similar goals of justice, fairness, or equality.

## **2.2. The Ethnography of the Homeless**

Nowadays, in the increasingly globalized world, the material and moral conditions that animate local events are not easily captured by the ethnographer's lens (Shore 2006). In a critique, Paul Willis chastises anthropology for its lingering empiricism and persistent humanism, concluding with a plea for more 'theoretically informed ethnographic studies' (Willis 2002: 182). In the context of homelessness, complex issues are interconnected. Regarding this issues, Maurice, one day, asked me a question that was not easily answered:

“Are the issues complex because finding a solution is difficult and challenging, or because those seeking the solutions are not clear on the problem?”

As a result, it is no longer enough for the goals of ethnography to be solely what Malinowski and Geertz called “to grasp the natives’ point of view.” Anthropology now has to deal and collaborate with real activists by using ethnography to unmask both the material and ideological effects of neoliberalism, “not as abstractions but as a very real set of interventions into local settings which produce the effect of limiting the spectrum of political possibilities activists are able to envision” (Maskovsky 2001: 216). Hyatt and Lyon-Callo (2003: 177) use term “ethnography from below” to point out a wider role for ethnographic research. They believe that ethnographic research can offer at the very least a way to help people in the communities most disadvantaged by contemporary social policy



to see in a new light the ways in which their struggles and their histories have been “disappeared” and the ways in which their situations have been produced by the actions of the powerful.

A variety of theoretical approaches to homelessness have been used to address the issue of homelessness. The main problem in theorizing homelessness has been derived from inadequate conceptualization of its causation, in which the distinction between “individual” and “structural” causes is unclear (Fitzpatrick 2005; Sommerville 2011). In general, Somerville (1992: 531) argues that homelessness is a multidimensional phenomenon, which can be explained in terms of a complex assemblage of relationships of a number of different kinds, so that it can be understood as an ideological construct created by our experiences, our intellects, and our imaginations. However, one of the common simplified conceptions about homelessness that has been widely used is derived from what Durkheim (1982, cited in Sommerville 2011: 1) called a “social fact,” that is, a truth about social relations that can be measured or quantified independently of our experiences of those relations (Somerville 2011: 1). In this framework, homelessness in many cases is mainly defined in policy terms, as a product of processes of social exclusion (Somerville 2011: 2). Neale (1997, cited in Sommerville 2011: 2), for example, focuses on her explanation of a simple causal issue that being homeless is to lose a stake in several potent social forces: capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism, and home ownership. On the other hand, Jones and Pleace (2010: 9, cited in Sommerville 2011: 2) suggest that homeless people are classified according to whether they count as homeless under current legislation or “are in a situation of housing exclusion.”

In the United States, drawing upon his ethnography of a homeless shelter in Northampton, Massachusetts, Lyon-Callo (2004: 13) underlines that popular discourses about homeless people continue to view them as somehow ‘faulty,’ their homelessness a result of pathological deviance or flaws within their bodies and minds. Therefore, the bodies and minds of homeless people become the sole locations for the causes of their homelessness. Consequently, the practices operating within the shelters contribute to the production of docile and deviant bodies which constitutes what he terms the *medicalization* of homelessness (Lyon-Callo (2004: 14). He then argues that the neoliberal policies followed by the sheltering industry in contemporary America are responses that operate under a hypothesis of individualized deviancy (Lyon-Callo 2004: 14). As a result, solving homelessness, instead of seeking collective solutions to a housing crisis, has increasingly become about normalizing homeless people to rationalize the inequalities they face (Lyon-Callo 2004: 16).

Lyon-Callo’s (2004) work is important to see the way structural factors that create homelessness become normalized and reinforced in day-to-day thought and action, and the difficulties particular actors encounter in challenging that normalization. Moreover, it is also useful to analyze the transition to neoliberalism, the dominant economic system since the late 1970s, which stresses privatization and free market approaches to social problems. Neoliberalism involved both the dismantling of the social safety net and the development of hegemonic governing forms based on blaming those without access to wealth, the medicalization of impoverishment, and the normalization of economic precarity. In this case, governments and service providers have viewed the growth in homelessness largely as a matter of individual problems and deviancy rather than a matter of privilege, access,

low wages, and unaffordable housing. Interventions have thus focused on changing individual behaviors rather than on structural factors (Lyon-Callos 2004).

Suzanne Fitzpatrick (2005), in her article, “Explaining Homelessness: a Critical Realist Perspective”, tries to criticize those “positivist” explanations by arguing that the causation of homelessness can only be explained in terms of high levels of correlation between certain factors and homelessness. Fitzpatrick (2005: 6) points out that what is important in understanding and explaining homelessness is the “recurring pattern of life events and circumstances implicated in ‘pathways’ into homelessness.” Therefore, she argues that homelessness is a “socially constructed” issue that has a pattern that varies from one person to another (Fitzpatrick 2005: 8). From the perspective of realist social theory, Fitzpatrick’s central idea is that “[h]omelessness...is not a cultural phenomenon, but rather a signifier of objective material and social conditions” (Fitzpatrick 2005: 12). As Somerville (2011: 4) points out, Fitzpatrick’s analysis focuses on contrasting “structure” with “culture”, “objective” with “subjective”, and “material” or “real” with “ideal”. She then identifies the cause of homelessness mainly as “structures” of different kinds (economic, housing and patriarchal/interpersonal) plus “individual attributes” (basically, factors that reduce personal resilience).

From this point, Somerville (2011: 24) suggests that ethnographic approaches, focusing on the cultural context of homeless and the relationships between those cultures and mainstream culture or society hold the greatest promise for understanding homelessness as a multidimensional phenomenon. Somerville draws upon his analysis of three different ethnographic works: *The Culture of homelessness* by Megan Ravenhill’s (2008); *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco* by Teresa Gown

(2010); and *Swept Up Lives?: Re-envisioning the Homeless City* by Paul Cloke *et al.*

(2010). From them he argues that ethnographic approach gives us a deeper understanding of the issue of homelessness.

Ravenhill's notion of the "culture of homelessness" can be considered as one of key contributions to the study of homelessness. Based on interviews with 150 homeless people over the period of ten years, Ravenhill (2008: 157) emphasizes that homeless people have to be understood in terms of their relationships with others and the social networks in which they participate as well as the 'cultures' they create together. As she argues:

“...[T]he homeless culture acts as a strong anchor, reinforcing its values and creating a community in which the individual is accepted for who they are, thus creating stability and security. This need for security, order and predictability ties the homeless person into the homeless culture, making it difficult or impossible to leave and re-engage with seemingly hostile mainstream society.”

Rebecca Tunstall, in her preface to this book, claims that “Ravenhill's first great innovation is to see homeless people as social beings” (Ravenhill 2008: xviii). Ravenhill defines homelessness as rooflessness, which includes as a set of relationships “that encompasses individuals' relationship with themselves, their peers, and the community as well as the employment and housing markets” (Ravenhill 2008: 13). In this context, as Somerville has noted, as a theory of homelessness, it is severely limited as it tends to ignore the individual completely by lumping people together into labelled groups which have been classified and defined, and around which policies and organizations have been created. And, I would argue that it also ignores larger structures of inequality, as does the Oscar Lewis' (1959) idea of the “(sub) culture of poverty”. However, it is useful because it also facilitates understanding of the role of the media and public attitudes in policy

development, in the financing of projects, and in setting research agendas (Somerville 2011: 4).

More importantly, Ravenhill also elaborates what she calls “homeless industry”, a concept she adopted from Snow and Anderson (1993) who write about the “shelter industry” in California, which “includes statutory and voluntary sector organizations, campaigners, churches and charities, plus academics, intellectuals, research organizations, authors and even university or college training courses” (Ravenhill 2008: 14). One of the implications of Snow and Anderson’s study, in terms of the dangers of the institutionalization of emergency services for homelessness (shelter industry), is that:

“Emergency service programs provide desperately needed assistance for those who find themselves on the streets, but they do little more than facilitate accommodation to a destitute existence...they are largely incapable of providing the support necessary to get [them] off the streets...there is also danger that a “shelter’s industry” may develop that acquires a strong stake in the permanent existence of what should rightly be construed as temporary emergency measures” (Snow and Anderson 1993: 301).

Another prominent ethnographic work which provides a new insight about homelessness, is *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco* by Teresa Gowan. She deals with shelter issues and describes “the homeless archipelago”, the “islands” of shelters for homeless people, as “islands of deprivation, mundane and ubiquitous yet socially apart” (Gowan 2010: 187). Gowan (2010: 165) identifies homelessness with San Francisco street subcultures, which she classifies into three groups. *Recyclers* earn income by collecting empty bottles from commercial and domestic premises and selling them to recycling centers. They regard themselves as the new hobos. *Hustlers* get money by selling drugs and petty crime. *Dumpster divers* make money by salvaging from rubbish dumpsters. Interestingly, Gowan (2010: xviii) also categorizes

homeless people in San Francisco into three different types. *Sin-talk* refers to the situation of homelessness as a result of the homeless person's own actions or "sins" (criminality, alcoholism, irresponsible behavior, etc.). *Sick-talk* is a result of their health problem (mental or physical illnesses). *System-talk* refers to the failures of market and state provision.

Cloke *et al.* (2010: 134), in their comparative ethnography between the shelter system in the United States and seven contrasting towns and cities in the United Kingdom, also found distinct subcultures, even within hostels. They characterize homelessness in terms of what they call "street nomenclature;" the groups they identify are: *pissheads*, *alkies* or *drinkers* (alcoholics); *junkies* or *smackheads* (heroin addicts); and *straigtheads* ("normal" or those who have no major substance dependencies). What is interesting in their research is that they recognize some examples of policy transfer from the US to the UK, especially the technologies and techniques designed "to manage a problematic street culture," such as: variations of zero tolerance policing, making begging a "recordable offence"; the "designing out" of certain street activities; the introduction of "diverted giving schemes"; the introduction of Designated Public Places Orders to restrict the consumption of alcohol in public places; and of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (Cloke *et al.* 2010: 9).

Their research focuses on homeless services provided by non-statutory organizations and faith-based organizations, so throughout their book they also emphasize emotional and spiritual dimensions of homeless people, which in both the US and UK are ignored by governmental approaches. In this context, derived from Coles's (1997) rethinking of the politics of generosity, they use discourse analysis of organizational

statements from more than 100 hostels and day centers which they organize into three ideal types of ethos. *Christian caritas* or *faith-in-action* or *evangelism* involves a sharing of faith with and acting out of love for others. *Secular humanism* involves obligations to our fellow human beings, typically based on notions of human rights and rules of social justice. *Postsecular charity* is based on a critique of the first two types for their lack of receptivity to the “otherness” of service recipients, and which does not judge the other in a general way, but aims to meet their specific needs unconditionally, through an “interconnectedness of responsibility between self and other” (Cloke *et al.* 2010: 53-59).

Moreover, driven by globalization and the changing nature of contemporary life in all societies, anthropological research has become more concerned with larger issues of human suffering. Furthermore, the research considers how these are brought about by the conjuncture of specific social and political relations including displacement, dispossession, and the social construction of property relations and how people have rights over other people (Green 2003). With these considerations in mind, my research is based on ethnographic approaches, because as Somerville (2011: 24) points out, through ethnography, homeless people are seen as primarily social beings, with specific histories, living in specific environments, and relating to those environments and to other homeless, non-homeless people, and also to themselves, in different ways.

More importantly, even though this study actually rests on the idea that the homeless is not a specific “culture,” but that their situations are a product of larger structural forces, there are several benefits or salient points that can be obtained from applying ethnographic approaches to the study of homelessness. First, we are directed to pay more attention to people’s life stories. Second, we must set these life stories in the

context of the life stories of those with whom they come into contact. Third, we must reflect on the meaning of these life stories in the construction and maintenance of different cultures, seeing cultures as interactively and discursively constructed across a number of dimensions. And fourth, we must analyze the relationships between different cultures, thus building up an overall picture of how homelessness is produced (Somerville 2011: 24).

What makes this study different with Somervilles's study is that

### **2.3. Homeless in America: Racial Disparities, Structural Violence, and the Criminalization of Homelessness**

On March 21, 2014, just after I presented my first conference paper about the issue of homelessness in Indianapolis at the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) Annual Meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico, I was struck by a news story and a YouTube video informing me that a homeless man named James M. Boyd was shot and killed by an Albuquerque police officer on March 16. At that time, I was googling any information about historical sites, museums, and festivals around downtown Albuquerque that I could visit, but the homeless shooting incident really demanded that I explore more about this issue. *The Washington Post* (Mark Berman, March 31, 2014) reported that since the beginning of 2010, the Albuquerque police had shot and killed 23 people; there were also more than a dozen non-fatal shootings, including two in March, 2014. Compared to the number of fatal shootings by police in New York, where the number of residents is 15 times larger than Albuquerque, the city reached nearly the same number (25) during 2011 and 2012. The incidents in Albuquerque stand out, in part because of the city's size, and provoked a large protest during the last two weeks of March through the beginning of April 2014, ending with a chaotic confrontation between the protesters and police.



Even though I did not find that there were similar homeless shooting incidents in Indianapolis, at least not over the period of my master's program at IUPUI, 2012-2014, the eviction of the Irish Hill homeless camp which had more than 60 residents according to city officials on August 26, 2013 (*Indystar.com* 2013) and the death of a homeless man in a campsite (in the *Jungle* campsite) during the sub-zero temperatures in January 2014 (*Wthr.com* 2014) have led me to imagine how hard it is to live homeless in the United States. After I had an opportunity to explore the stories behind the eviction of the Irish Hill homeless camp for my Urban Anthropology class project in the fall 2013, I then also realized that the issue of homelessness in the United States is more complicated than I had thought.

Starting with the word "homeless", Valado (2006) found that it has only been used and adopted into common parlance during the last 20-30 years as a common term for people who had been previously labeled with a variety of terms, including beggars, bums, hobos, tramps, transients, drunks, vagrants, vagabonds, mendicants and itinerant laborers. Before the 1970-80s these groups were dominated by single adult males, rather than families or they consisted of groups who traveled as a way of life such as gypsies and traveling actors or artists. "Homeless" was also used to refer to people who ended up without housing due to the U.S. economic crises, Civil War, and the Great Depression (Valado 2006: 24). Since the late 1970s and the beginning of 1980s, the peak period of deindustrialization, a diverse array of different groups, including families, women, children, mentally ill individuals, veterans, elderly, and people with developmental challenges began to appear on the streets. Valado (2006: 24) also found that the term "homeless" was popularized by social service workers, scholars, and advocates to

highlight the structural causes of the changing issue of homelessness, including lack of affordable housing and living wage jobs, cuts in social welfare provision, and as a strategy to engender sympathy for these “new homeless” who were clearly not just wayward drunks (Valado 2006: 24).

Based on conversations with almost all my homeless informants, none of them is comfortable being called “homeless”. Almost all of the Central Library officers call them “street people”, except one security staff who sadly used the phrase “they are zombies”. One of my key informants preferred to be called “unhoused”, and many of others were happy to be called just by their names. An old white homeless guy even lied to me in my first conversation, telling me that he had an apartment to live in. After that, whenever I met him either in the Central Library or in the IUPUI campus library, he always tried to avoid me and never wanted to talk to me. Later, another homeless man told me that he stayed sometimes at Wheeler Mission, in his friend’s apartment, or wherever he could. This case reminded me of what one homeless informant, Maurice, said, that building a personal relationship is extremely important for understanding homelessness because many homeless people will only “tell the truth” to those they trust.

Dating back to the era of the 1870s, Kusmer (2002: 38) shows that this was the crucial period in American history when the issue of homelessness first emerged as a national issue. Although there were no national figures documenting the demography of the homeless population, he points out that African Americans at that time represented a very small segment of the homeless population, less than 10% of the population. Until the 1950s and 1960s, the typical person experiencing homelessness was white, male, and in his 50s (Kusmer 2002: 225-230). Since that time, the scope and demographics of the

homeless problem have changed dramatically. In 2006, the National Alliance to End Homelessness noted that families with children comprised 41% of the homeless population, and that 42% of the population was African American. The U.S. Conference of Mayors (2006) also noted that the composition of the average homeless family was a single parent household headed by an African-American female.

Nowadays, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2009) provides a federal definition of homeless which is a condition of people without a regular dwelling. Those who are homeless are most often unable to acquire and maintain regular, safe, secure, and adequate housing or night-time residence. Moreover, in an article that appeared in *American Behavioral Scientist*, Bogard (September 2001) uses the term *homeless* to refer to people whose primary night-time residence is in a homeless shelter, a warming center, a domestic violence shelter, cardboard boxes, or another *ad hoc* housing situation. Another definition from the Office of Applied Studies, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2007) includes persons who sleep in a public or private place not designed for use as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. These definitions serve as the basis for labeling people “homeless” and, thus, are a large determinant of their eligibility for various social services (Valado 2006: 25). These definitions are a political issue, as Valado (2006: 25) points out, and using a broader definition would drastically increase the number of people considered homeless, which would highlight the need for more comprehensive funding of social services.

If I reflect on these definitions while developing my perspective as an Indonesian, non-Western ethnographer, the causes of homelessness in the Western world are generally conceived of as different from those in the non-Western world. Homelessness in the West

is commonly explained in terms of a lack of affordable housing coupled with family disintegration, drug and alcohol abuse, and the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill (Glasser 1994: 9). On the other hand, non-Western explanations focus on the effects of rural to urban migration, severe unemployment and underemployment (as in the Indonesian case), and the spread of refugees from wars and disasters (Glasser 1994: 10). Interestingly, one of the common analyses is noted by Wilde (2006), who suggests that it is the same capitalist subtext that drives the crucial dynamic of contrasting causal factors. After all, having access to private property is dependent on access to a living wage, either from the state, the private sector, or the informal economy. As a result, “counting” the homeless is a notoriously problematic task, fraught with difficulties regarding both how homelessness is defined and the often conflicting motivations of different organizations that are attempting to address it.

In a broader context, many people argue that discourses about homelessness cannot be separated from issues of race. Nunes (2012) points out that in discussing homelessness, race is often the “elephant in the room”, but no matter how much we avoid it, the blunt reality is that African Americans are greatly overrepresented in homeless shelters across the United States. Michele Alexander’s (2010: 1-5) ground-breaking work, *The New Jim Crow*, shows that homelessness, especially among the African American population is one of the results of long-term structural violence. She notes that the majority of young black men in large American cities are “warehoused in prisons” and their labor is no longer needed in the globalized economy. Once they are labeled as “felons”, they become trapped in a second-class status that they find difficult to escape. The two associations, crime

(means prison) and homelessness (means poverty), are the common issues perceived as societal repression of the African American population, and to a lesser degree, of Latinos.

Alexander (2010) claims that the U.S. criminal justice system uses the War on Drugs as a primary tool for what she calls “a racial conspiracy to put blacks back in their place” by enforcing traditional, as well as new, modes of discrimination and repression. As a result, rather than focus on finding more effective solutions to solve the problem of poverty, unemployment, and homelessness among the African American and Latino population, a huge percentage of annual budgets has been allocated to build prisons and its system to incarcerate 25% of the world’s prisoners, the majority of whom are African Americans.

Based on her work and some of the issues discussed above related to structural violence in understanding the racial dimensions and social causes of homelessness in Indianapolis, I found that a large number of homeless people who use the public library facilities do so as the result of two primary problems: the failure or at least the ineffectiveness of the “shelter-first approach,” and the lack of understanding from the service providers, agencies, and local community about a variety of struggles faced by homeless people in dealing with the structural violence of everyday life in the urban settings.

Using Paul Farmer’s (2004) notion of structural violence, which focuses on the indirect but systematic social machinery of oppression exerted by everyone who belongs to a certain social order, I locate this study within a framework that sees a visible correlation between the political, economic, and symbolic development of neoliberalism in the United States. This approach, which is assessing the full social machinery of

oppression, provides new insight to the issue of homelessness and analyzes the role of the service providers and agencies in redefining and reproducing homelessness in the context of neoliberal systems in the United States. For Farmer, anthropological concerns with the ethnographically visible, which is the present that lives and breathes before an ethnographer's eyes, must be contextualized within the broader historical, political, and economic matrix that led to the creation of that present (Farmer 2004: 307). Glasser and Bridman (1996) point out that anthropologists are increasingly turning from "studying down", focusing on subaltern groups, to "studying up", looking at the organizational cultures, institutions, and agents that mold many facets of what constitute the ethnographic present.

A clear example, as shown by Lyon-Callo (2004), is in his study of the homeless sheltering industry. He describes how Northampton shelters' residents and some staff members politically organized themselves in a campaign for higher wages and lower rents. After a series of veiled threats from local business and political leaders, they were met with a 20 percent reduction in funding the following year. The shelter was then structurally not permitted to deviate from an agenda that he calls "medicalizing homelessness", a view that sees bodies and minds of homeless people as the sole location for the cause of their homelessness (Lyon-Callo 2004: 168).

He also saw clear links between tactical business and governmental decisions. Increasing globalization of capital; deindustrialization, the growth of temporary labor; altered tax policies; declining union membership; the growth of non-unionized service sector employment; institutionalized racism; gentrification in the name of community development; and changing political landscape all have contributed to the recent

production of increased economic inequality and homelessness in the United States during the last two decades (Lyon-Callo 2000:329). In his study, Lyon-Callo shows how structural violence plays out within the daily operating frameworks of the very service providers, agencies, and organizations formed to reduce homelessness.

In a broader context, as one of my key informants, Dr. Provence, said, there are many people and agencies that intend to help the homeless, but who use homeless people as a vehicle for getting their own paycheck, their own organization, and their own business. Instead of pursuing their original goal to end homelessness, many of them are trapped by funding pressures about homelessness. Service providers become holding managers of those thrown to the socio-economic situations in America (Wilde 2006). Instead of improving services for the homeless, in many cases they are “happy” with the eviction of homeless people from campsites by city officials, because the “shelter first” policy will keep their beds full and their funding stable. In reality they keep the homeless invisible in the city landscape.

In Indianapolis, the two main reasons given for the eviction of the Irish Hill homeless camp under the Davidson Street bridge were the protests by business owners surrounding the area and the renovation of the bridge by its owner (there are two bridges and one of them belongs to the CSX railroad). As my homeless informants told me, the reason they lived under the street bridge was because there was no other place to live that was as convenient. This area is close to all the homeless service providers, is away from downtown neighborhoods, is surrounded by vacant land and train tracks, and has easy traffic access. The only night-homeless shelter gives them only ten consecutive days to stay and has other restrictive rules. Outside the homeless shelters, if they violate rules, by

sleeping under street bridges, city parks, or other public spaces that have no trespassing signs, the police will catch them and send them to jail. After a while in jail, they have to have an address to be released, but as they are homeless, they have no place that can be considered their address. As usual, the police will send them to the Wheeler Mission where dozens of homeless people with similar stories face this similar vicious circle of homelessness. According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP 2009) “the criminalization of homelessness” refers to the measures which prohibit life-sustaining activities such as sleeping or camping, eating, sitting, and or asking for money or resources in public spaces, and include criminal penalties for violations of these acts.

These acts, putting the socio-economic issues into the criminal justice system, make issues of homelessness in many cities around the United States more complicated. As a result of those acts, homeless people, including those who usually come to the Central Library and the IUPUI Library, tend to hide themselves from non-homeless people. Another pattern I found was that while they hide themselves at night they attempt to blend in with those who are non-homeless during the day to conceal the fact that they are indeed homeless. Within the homeless community outside the shelter, they do not or at least rarely communicate with each other. Even at feedings by various organizations, the homeless rarely speak to one another. There is a general acknowledgment with a head nod or smile but very few actually communicate. This culture, which coincided with a systemic structural violence in their lives, made me realize why, at the beginning and even until the end of this study, I had difficulties talking to some homeless people. They tend to hide themselves, hide their body, hide their fear, hide their problems, and most sadly, hide their



stories, the very thing that could be used by those who claim and actually have authority to help them.

The point here is not to suggest that none of the service providers and agencies homeless people do things right or that the homeless do not have problems (especially with mental health, substance abuse and alcohol), but the point is that contemporary discursive notions about homelessness are “top down” oriented and rarely try seriously to explore the homeless person’s perspectives using a “bottom up” approach. In this regard, as Shackel (2012, cited in Jackson 2012: 10) has noted, changing the narrative is often a result of a significant national grass roots efforts. In Indianapolis, from the library buildings where many homeless people stay during the day and which some of them use as their media center as well as a “day shelter” for their activism, the narratives of homelessness are about to change.

#### **2.4. The Public Library and the Homeless**

According to the Federal State Cooperative System (FSCS), a formal system established in 1988 whereby the state and federal governments work together to collect public library information and statistics, enumerated in the public library census in 1993, there were 8,929 public libraries in the United States. By December 2013, based on the 2013 public libraries survey, the number is now more than 9,200 public libraries in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the outlying areas. Although a public library is commonly defined as a publicly owned, tax supported facility that any citizen can use, FSCS defines it as follows:

“A public library is established under state enabling laws or regulations to serve the residents of a community, district, or region. A public library is an entity that provides at least the following: 1) an organized collection of printed or other library materials, or a combination thereof; 2) a paid staff to provide and interpret

such materials as required to meet the informational, cultural, recreational, and educational needs of a clientele; 3) an established schedule in which services of the staff are available to clientele; and 4) the facilities necessary to support such a collection, staff and schedule” (Owens and Kindel 1996).

Moreover, Rubin (2010) points out that there are at least five fundamental characteristics shared by public libraries: they are supported by taxes, governed by a board to serve the public interest, open to all and every community member, entirely voluntary in that no one is ever forced to use the services provided, and provide basic services without charge. Based on the definitions above, it is no doubt that privatization of public services, including libraries, has become a hot issue, which has led to the center of national debates throughout the United States for many years. As a response to this issue, in June 2011, The American Library Association (ALA) published a report entitled “*Keeping Public Libraries Public: A Checklist for Communities Considering Privatization of Public Libraries*”. In this report Tumulty *et al.* (2011: 3) note that the federal government began to contract with private companies to manage and operate federal libraries in the 1980s.

This period of time coincided with the peak era of deindustrialization, as discussed above, with the emergence of various kinds of “street people” in the United States. This was followed by what is commonly known as the widespread advent of urban redevelopment projects, also termed “urban renewal”, “redevelopment,” or “gentrification”. These phenomena have led to the decades-long trend of redeveloping impoverished urban areas for more profitable uses and at the same time have eliminated any undesirable aspects of urban life from redeveloped spaces (Aguirre and Brooks 2001; Mitchel 1995; Zukin 1991).

In this context, by the 1980s, urban redevelopment projects destroyed many skid rows and impoverished neighborhoods without providing adequate replacement housing

for residents of those areas. They also reduced the stock of affordable and temporary housing and drove up property values in redeveloped areas. As a result, these two main factors caused more people to end up homeless (Valado 2006: 38). In response to the growing number of visibly homeless people in many metropolitan cities, a massive social service infrastructure has arisen since this period. However, this effort has not been preventing and curtailing homelessness effectively because a large number of homeless individuals have continued to occupy and utilize public spaces (Valado 2006: 41).

In her research *Factors Influencing Homeless People's Perception and Use of Urban Space* in Tucson, Arizona, Valado (2006) found that due to the fact that homeless people no longer have a place where they “belonged”, they adapted by using public spaces in unintended ways such as camping under the street bridges, sleeping in city parks, squatting in abandoned buildings, or bathing in library bathrooms. Interestingly, municipal authorities in the metropolitan cities throughout the United States react in almost the same way against such unintended uses, implementing a variety of legal and informal restrictions on the use of space designed to drive homeless individuals out of certain areas. Actions like the eviction of the Irish Hill homeless camp under Davidson Street Bridge near Downtown Indianapolis during the summer of 2013 has become popular news in the media. Valado (2006: 31) also underlines the point that the issue of homelessness has changed the urban landscape making it unrelentingly hostile toward homeless people but to which they nevertheless must adapt by creating their own unique landscapes to seek out private, safe, functional, comfortable, and supportive places to be.

In many cases, the appearance of homeless people in public libraries can be considered as a dilemma, especially as revealed in my interviews with the Central Library

officers. The fact that the homeless are a changing and transient population makes them a difficult population for whom to plan and implement library services (Zipkowitz 1996; Turner 1993: 31). Turner (1993: 23) identifies the types of homeless people found in the library as "street people", who are:

“...raunchy looking folks..., who tend to travel with most of their worldly possessions in trash bags or bedrolls, wear very ragged clothes, often haven’t bathed lately, and may or may not exhibit various eccentric or antisocial behaviors indicative of mental illness, alcoholism, or other substance abuse. The defining characteristic of the street person is...appearance.”

Murphy (1999) points out that dozens of articles have been written about how librarians and library workers deal with the presence of homeless people mainly because they can be smelly and mentally disturbed. However, what many people forget is that non-homeless people can also be smelly and mentally disturbed. Public libraries can be considered as a safe and warm shelter where, for at least part of the day, homeless people can be assured of physical safety. However, the presence of homeless people with their stigmatized social identity has challenged the public libraries’ original roles.

In response to that issue, the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), a council committee under the American Library Association (ALA), is in the process of reviewing The Library Bill of Rights and its interpretations in preparation for the ninth edition of the Intellectual Freedom Manual. They will ensure that the interpretations make it clear that a person’s housing status should not be used to deny access to library services (ALA 2013: 25). Based on this last point, I challenge what Simmons (1995: 117) has argued, that is, that “traditionally the information contained by the library has been used for social change, but ironically, the role of the library as an active agent in social change rarely has

emanated from within the agency itself, perhaps because librarians are guilty in lacking the spirit of advocacy.”

In my research I am also concerned about the ways the Central Library, at least over the last five years, has been addressing the issue of homelessness by working in collaboration with other organizations whose primary missions are also to reduce homelessness and using its resources to help contribute to the ALA’s campaign called, “Extending Our Reach: Reducing Homelessness Through Library Engagement”. On the other hand, the IUPUI Library, as a new place or a “new day shelter” for some homeless people has been reluctant to address the issue of homelessness. In this case, because the fact that the IUPUI Library has a much more limited group of people (students and faculty) to serve, not the general public, complaints are more pointed.

Certainly, both the Central Library and the IUPUI Library are crucial spaces that cannot be eliminated from discussions of homelessness. Therefore, these institutions can play more important roles as more active agents to help contribute to the efforts of ending homelessness.

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### **Chapter 3**

## **THE FACE OF HOMELESSNESS IN INDIANAPOLIS**

Based on my observations throughout the downtown area of Indianapolis (figure 3.1), the majority of visibly homeless people are adult men. They are usually sitting down on the pedestrian areas (not on the street as I see in my hometown) and doing what homeless people call “flying the sign” and “shaking the cup” to passively ask for money. Some homeless people use another way to ask people for money by using or playing a musical instrument, whether in a group or as individuals. My homeless informants call them “buskers”, a term that is commonly used in the United Kingdom to refer to any street musician, homeless or not. These activities, in the city’s legal terms, are known as “passive soliciting,” which refers to any kind of activity intended to solicit money or an action without any speech or sound but that could nonetheless be considered harassing people. Anything other than those actions is considered “panhandling”, which is illegal, but the police and city officials use a single term “panhandlers” to label all of the homeless on the street, including the “buskers”.

Those are the homeless who are visible on the street, but based on the 2013 Point-in-Time Homeless Count there are more than 1500 people who stay in the campsites, day shelters, abandoned houses, city parks, and in the Central Library and IUPUI Library during the day. Interestingly, as reported by the Indianapolis Business Journal (*IBJ.Com*) on April 9, 2014, there was an agreement between panhandlers, who were represented by my informant Maurice, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana (ACLU), and the City of Indianapolis. Based on this agreement, begging along roadways and directed at passing motorists will not be allowed, but begging on sidewalks is fine, as long as it is directed at pedestrian areas and is not aggressive.



Figure 3.1 Various different faces of homelessness (“passive soliciting”) in Downtown Indianapolis (photos by Karim, spring 2013)

### **3.1. The “Groups” and the “Tribes” of the Homeless**

As the former “Mayor” and a “full-time resident” of the Irish Hill homeless community, Maurice had learned how homeless people in Indianapolis had organized themselves into different categories with different interests, backgrounds, preferred and spaces. Before I met him, it was difficult to know the names of homeless groups, camps, and their “leaders” because each homeless person usually attaches to a specific space or spot, camp site, and sometimes shelter he or she calls “home” that gives them a nighttime place to stay. In Indianapolis and other Midwestern cities in the United States, as Maurice argued, there is no fixed or permanent space for the homeless because the weather also dictates where they have to stay. For example, many of them prefer to live in the shelters or abandoned buildings during the winter but they sleep on the streets or in other spaces outside buildings during the summer.

Maurice uses the term “group” to describe different homeless people based on common places where they usually stay. Maurice revealed that among the homeless in Indianapolis, they categorize themselves into five different groups. The first group is called the *Live Outside*, which consists of homeless people who usually stay in homeless camps, city parks, alley ways, bus stops or streets. *The Shelters* is the second group, meaning those who always or mostly go to emergency shelters first to fulfill their basic needs (sleeping, foods, laundry, and other necessities), even though there is always a time limitation in such places, such as Wheeler Mission’s 10-consecutive day rule. They also use the term “shelter people” for this group because they would not come to the homeless camps except when they were thrown out of the shelter.



The third group is called the *Bandos*, which refers to homeless people who stay in abandoned houses or abandoned buildings, especially at night during the winter. During the summer, or when the temperature is warmer, many of them also come to the campsites. Fourth, there are also a number of homeless people who live and store all their belongings in their cars or vans; they are called *The Cars*. Interestingly, as Maurice said, this is the biggest number of homeless people in Indiana and around the United States (as can easily be found in YouTube videos), but they are more “invisible” and are reluctant to be called homeless, because in many cases, they live in the cars temporarily, especially with their kids or family members. In order to get food and other resources from homeless service providers, and because they also have friends in the campsites, some of them park their cars close to the campsites, especially the Irish Hill homeless camp before it closed. This group (especially those who have kids) usually avoids all social service agencies because they are afraid that if they are discovered to have kids, they will be taken away. Children cannot live on the streets in the State of Indiana and in the City of Indianapolis.

The last group is known as the *Panhandlers*. This is the most visible group of homeless people in downtown Indianapolis and other metropolitan cities around the United States. They usually fly the homeless sign asking for money, “shake the cup”, and bring their belongings onto the streets. When they run out of money to buy food or whatever else they need, they would also come to the campsites. Because they are more visible, many people (and Maurice said that the policy makers have the same point of view) think that all homeless people are panhandlers. As a result, this group is often made the main target of rules or policies related to homeless issues in downtown areas in

Indianapolis. The word “panhandling” can be easily tracked in the City of Indianapolis’ laws, rules, or policies rather than “homeless” or other terms related to it.

According to Maurice and other homeless people I have met, the campsites utilized by the *Live Outside* group can be broken down into “tribes”. A “tribe” describes homeless people who utilize spaces under street bridges or other open spaces usually near bridges. He identified seven main “tribes” of the homeless in Indianapolis that usually consist of less than ten people, but one of them had 12 homeless men. Each tribe has its own leader, and some of the camps are identified by the name of the leaders. So, the term “tribe” here is specifically intended to refer to those who live in homeless camps that are considered a more “permanent” living spot (for both day and night) rather than other spaces (like sidewalks, city parks, and even homeless shelters) that are more temporary. It is interesting that those who sleep in the gazebo at Militray Park are not considered as members of any tribe. According to Maurice, those seven camps are:

➤ *The Jungle*

This camp is located on Washington Street and consists of three different (sub) camps with their own leaders, namely *Gerald’s camp*, *Steve’s camp*, and *Scotty’s camp*. What is interesting about this camp is that there is a specific “labeling” associated with the camp by the homeless community. As Maurice said: “...if you live in a camp and lack the social skills needed to exist within that community, you are usually kicked out and sent to *the Jungle* to live”.

➤ *The River Wood*

This camp is located at Kentucky Avenue and the White River, and is also known as *Jerry’s camp* among the homeless community.

➤ *The Salt Mines*

This camp is located across from the headquarters tower or building of the Eli Lilly & Co., and is also known as *Genesis's camp*

➤ *The Fern*

It is located across from the *River Wood* and is also known as *Victor's camp*

➤ *The Terry and Bedford*

It is located at South and Riverwood, and known as is *Terry's* and *Bedford's camp*.

➤ *The GM Bridge*

It is also known as *Chuck's camp* and is located on the site of General Motors plant.

➤ *The Zoo*

This camp is located across the street from the Indianapolis Zoo, and is known as the *Caveman's camp*.

To become a leader of the camp or someone who is considered as a “mayor” is not an easy job. As Maurice has pointed out, the leader is the one at the camp who takes responsibility for everybody, keeps trust, keeps the peace, tries to provide whatever the needs at the camps are, has the “right” first of all to be there, and becomes something like the “caretaker” of the others. For example, Maurice said that if the camp consists of non-drug users, the leader takes the responsibility for keeping this status, and if anybody from this camp violates the rule, the leader usually takes action to just kick them out of the camp.

Above all, the Irish Hill homeless camp was the major camp in the city which was considered a melting pot of all kinds for homeless people. Anyone was welcome to stay there. As Maurice commented,

“I welcomed everybody to our camp. If we had people with addiction problems, we could connect them with agencies that specialized in assisting them right from the camp. For example, if someone was ready to quit drinking [while they were under the influence of alcohol] we could call Harbor or Lights and make arrangements for that person to receive detox services, then transport them over to the detox center via our camp outreach team. While detoxing, we then would set-up a rehab stay at the ARC [Adult Recovery Center] for further addiction treatment. Because of these types of processes, and many other resources our camp community experienced great growth, especially when we helped people get themselves back on track and back into society. Those folks would tell people what they had experienced at the camp, then the reputation of the camp started drawing people from all over the state just by word of mouth. It was amazing!”

Maurice tells the story of how he became the “Mayor” of his camp and his homeless community:

“When I first got there, there were about 9 or 10 people. The way the camp was set-up was horrible. People were just surviving. Just going here and going there with no connection to each other (but living together). Then it moved to summer time, it was hot too, and there’s a Hardees restaurant around the corner which was being used for water and its restrooms; but after 8 o’clock they close inside. So if you didn’t have any water after they closed, you were in trouble. So, I said, we need water here at the camp. The next morning I went to Walmart and got water, ice and a 10 gallon water cooler to set up. The people didn’t know what to make of this. We now had water 24/7. And people didn’t have to leave the camp as much or worry what they would do after Hardee’s closed. As a result of the water, people started to talk more and communicate more with each other. The water was the key. After the water problem was resolved, then food started to come in but it needed to be coordinated. Faith-based groups would bring food out randomly. The problem here was, on one day we could get as many as 10 groups bringing food by. Then the next day no groups would show up. I remember thinking “this seems like a feast or famine situation.” So I talked to the churches and we made a schedule on the days they would come and we posted that information on a bulletin board in the camp for all to see. Interestingly, people who lived in houses (low-income, section 8) or housing programs and shelters starting coming by our camp just to eat. So, once the food and water was in place more people started coming on down.”

Regarding the history of the camp, he said:

“...the area was already called the Irish Hill since about 1909. There were homes that area at that time but then the highway came through and cut off the street. People started to migrate away from the area, but the name stayed that way for the whole neighborhood. It was a neighborhood, and we were also a neighborhood.”

For the homeless community, the camp was not just a place to be called “home” but also a hub for other homeless camps. As he revealed,

“Because we were the largest camp in the city, we became the distribution center for the other camps in the city and surrounding areas. Because of our popularity we found ourselves in the newspaper often. People wrote all kinds of articles about us. As a result, we would get more exposure which generated more resources. I believe we were getting more resources from the donut counties than our own Marion County. People were coming down bringing all kinds of resources, firewood, tents, furniture, books, blankets, clothes, and canned goods. This is how we became a distribution site, because we had so much stuff that we could not find places to store it. So, it only seemed logical to share with the other camp communities. So, as people kept bringing the stuff; we started to reach out to the other camps. This too needed to be coordinated. So, we collaborated with a few faith-based groups and initiated a “block party” every Sunday - food and fellowship. This was the platform we used to communicate with the other camp leaders and their camp communities. So, the camp leaders would come to our “block party” for the food and fellowship but we would also discuss the needs at their camps. For example, the Riverwood camp would say, “hey we don’t have anyone bring us food on Mondays. So we would redirect someone that was bringing food to our camp on Mondays to the Riverwood camp until we could set something up for them. Same with firewood, propane and the like; whatever the need was at the other camps, we could provide it.”

In confronting the reasons given by the city officials for the camp’s eviction, he argued:

“...it belongs to the people, the community. You know the cause, it belongs to the people, we elect the officials, and the officials elect the government. It belongs to us. We had an issue because of politics. The property on the South side was sold to some developers, so therefore they would build condos and towers. So if the camp is there, the value of these properties go down. So, if the camp is closed, they can build and the property can go up. So, what they do downtown in Indianapolis, they have a financial strategy called 1031 Exchange. What they do is, when the developers break down on the property, they can show people pictures of what would be there, and people pre-pay. Once it’s sold 80% each of them, it has the finance and then break down to start to build the building. But when we were there, nobody will pre-buy, because they were concerned about the camp. They went to the

police to get the camp eliminated. Then the politics started, you know; they called the [city] Mayor, and the Mayor seemed to be more a Mayor of businesses and corporations than the people. So that was an easy sale for them; just these things were happening.”

### **3.2. Shelters’ Dilemma**

The “shelter-first policy” as noted by Zimmerman and Welch (2011) has become a common strategy in dealing with homelessness. The negative features of the shelters, as perceived by many homeless people includes a lack of privacy, theft, violence, restrictive rules or even having to ‘endure’ religious indoctrination in exchange for food or a bed. In Indianapolis, the Coalition of Homeless Intervention and Prevention (CHIP) adopted what the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) (2009) called a “housing first” approach and added to it another concept called “housing plus” (refers to permanent affordable housing that incorporates various levels of services provided by trained staff responsible for services), as stated in the *2013-2018 Blueprint Indianapolis Continuum of Care: Making Homelessness Rare, Short-Lived, and Recoverable*. In the blueprint, it states that:

“Housing First” and “Housing Plus” approach emphasizes getting people into affordable housing with support services as quickly as possible, rather than having them live for long periods in emergency shelters or temporary housing.”

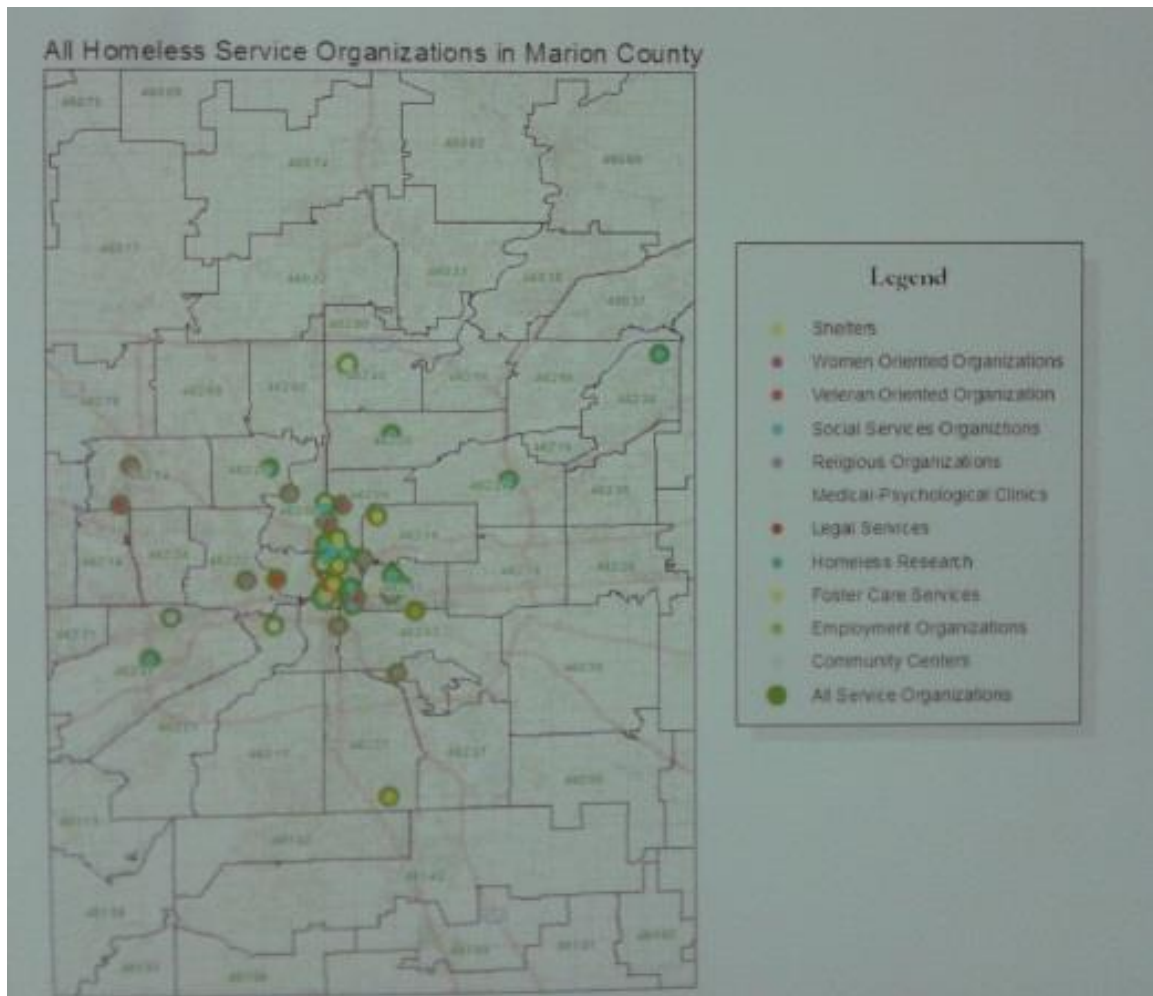
In order to see how the agencies are applying the “housing first” approach within a diversity of programs, it is important to refer to some of its key principles guided by NAEH, such as:

- Homelessness is first and foremost a housing problem and should be treated as such.
- Housing is a right to which all are entitled.

- People who are homeless or on the verge of homelessness should be returned to or stabilized in permanent housing as quickly as possible and connected to resources necessary to sustain that housing.
- Issues that may have contributed to a household's homelessness can best be addressed once they are housed

Based on the study of “the archaeology of homelessness” by Zimmerman *et al.* (2010) both in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Indianapolis, this policy neglects the fact that the presence of homeless people on the landscape is mostly short term and less formally organized, usually arising in response to a wide range of variables, ranging from police pressure to changing social programs. In Indianapolis there is a variety of emergency shelters, agencies, and service providers that can be accessed by the homeless to get help. Anthony Bozzo, an MA student in the Department of Geography at IUPUI who helped Dr. Zimmerman with his “Archaeology of Homelessness” project, made a map of all homeless service organizations around downtown Indianapolis (map 2). According to this map, it seems that there are some shelters and many resources that can be accessed by homeless people.

Map 4. Homeless Service Organizations in Marion County, Indianapolis



Source: Anthony Bozzo 2012

Most of the emergency shelters are faith-based institutions and they provide specific services to address specific issues associated with the homeless, such as: emergency shelter for family homelessness, for women, for domestic abuse victims, for drug addicts, or for mentally ill persons. Horizon House, which is the only non-faith-based shelter in the downtown area that provides service for all types of homelessness, is a day shelter that is only open from 7: 00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. They provide for some of the most important needs of homeless people, such as food, laundry, showers, storage, a 5-days on-site medical clinic, probation, veteran services, legal services, and mental health services



with psychiatrists and Marion County Health Department officers. Based on my interview with my informants, the day shelter is very helpful for the homeless, but a night shelter would be even more helpful. Many of my interviewees reflected the dilemmas associated with the day shelter services. For example, Brigitte said:

“...I can’t, because you’ve got to schedule to do laundry three days in advance and you have to be down there all day to get it done. They have a list; you have to have it on the list. You have to schedule a shower time. You might go in there at some o’clock in the morning and then they will tell you to take a shower at 3, and you have to stay there until your shower time. If you leave, they take you off the list. So, I would stay there the whole day, and I wouldn’t have money for the hotel that night.”

Another informant, Michael revealed:

“...the homeless industry here is about forty million dollars a year...they don’t house people; if they do house people, they lose their jobs. They provide service based on the people they serve.”

And Maurice also argued:

“... all are nonprofit organizations that rely on donations, so they have their own territories....their fund has been cut...when they cut the money, they cut our services because they’re not gonna cut the jobs. So, now they do just enough to justify keeping the door open. That’s crazy to me; they say they serve 300 people a day. You know how many people who get a shower? [they only serve] 12 [people], because they have the system where, first of all, you have shifts. But the people don’t know, the general public doesn’t know, they just think I can go there at 7 in the morning, sit until 3 and help myself to get it.”

In Wheeler Mission, the oldest (since 1893) and the biggest faith-based emergency shelter for homeless men in downtown Indianapolis has 124 of beds and another 77 mats (only for the winter) on the floor for night service. Their situation is even more complicated. Based on my interview with Matt, one of the Wheeler managers, more than 60 % of the residents are African American, about 45% White, a small percentage-Hispanic, and some Asian (2 from India, and surprisingly 1 Indonesian guy). The minimum age of the residents is 18 and the oldest one is 82, and the median age is in their

late twenties or the early thirties. But the trend from all the years is that the ages are getting younger and younger for the people who come in there.

Any homeless person can come there ten days every month or they can get additional days based on their case manager's supervision. During the winter, the period of a stay is based on how bad or good the weather is; many people can stay there longer during the cold weather. The reason for how this limited stay rule is applied is based on the Mission's perspective, as revealed in my interview with Matt who said:

"We don't want to be the 'mama' mission. We don't want this to be home to you. Because we give them three meals a day, through HIP, we also have doctors three times a week, we give them Tuberculosis and HIV testing, we give them showers, case management, transportation to jobs or doctor appointments or legal appointments. We give them a lot of things, but we're not gonna be your mom. It's not home; we don't want you to stay here."

What is interesting about the stories of the "residents" of Wheeler Mission is its indirect connection with Indiana Department of Correction (DOC). Although there is no *de jure* cooperation or agreement within the two institutions, for a long time Wheeler Mission has become a final destination for prisoners who have been released from jail. In the prison system in Indiana, when offenders get released from their imprisonment, the DOC cannot release them if they are homeless or if they have no exact address that can be used by the officers to fill out the necessary paperwork from the DOC. Everybody must give the police an address, and 520 East Market Street, which is the Wheeler's address, is the one that has been used for a long period of time, because what the DOC only needs an address where they can drop the people off from the bus after they are released from the jail.

Recently, this situation has become even worse. There are also several prisoners from other counties in Indiana who come to Marion County using the same Wheeler

address because some other counties do not have such homeless shelters. There are also people who are on home detention from the DOC, and because they do not have a home to be detained at, they would go to Wheeler. During my interview with one of the directors in Wheeler Mission, he showed me a prison letter dated February 26 from one of the residents who had already stayed there which said: “I will release on February 27, 2014. They will drop me off at Wheeler Mission center sometime at that date.”

This is also one of the reasons why many homeless people prefer to live on the streets or under the street bridges or campsites. They do not want to live in one big room with a lot of beds (figure 3.2), with people who have serious criminal backgrounds, drug addiction, alcoholism, and mental illnesses. Matt gave me a surprising number of how many people are ex-prisoners and how many people have been incarcerated;

“I don’t know the exact number, but it’s fairly large and it’s increasing. Now, in that number I would say not just the ones that are coming directly from [jail], but who have been incarcerated; it’s high. I would say 60-70%.”

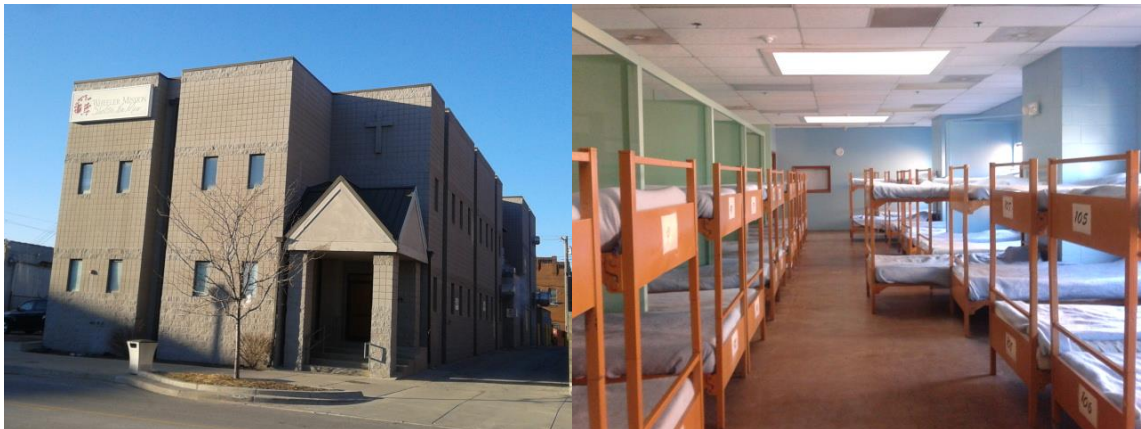


Figure 3.2 The Wheeler Mission building and its bed facilities for the homeless in Indianapolis (photos by Karim 2014)

Maurice, who had lived there when he first became homeless, said that people with those conditions occupy around 75% of the beds; he called them “DOC people”, not homeless people:

“When you go in there, it’s like being in jail or prison. The program format is identical to the work-release format. In at this time, out at that time, stuff in a tub and you go through metal detector every time you come in. That’s why Michael and I refuse to go there. Then the mentality in the environment is of a DOC nature. The people are very aggressive and everyone is on edge all the time. It’s just not a good place. Bad choices are around you all day long and they (the staff) know it and see it too. A lot of bullying was going on in the shelter and people taking from the weaker people and hurting other people. [It’s] just a really sad situation. And all the trouble makers have been to jail or just got out of prison so they don’t care about going back. There is a reason why they have nowhere to go when they get out of jail and I have seen the reason why first hand. Wheeler tells the public that they provide services for the homeless; in fact only 25% of their beds are for us – services included.

Another reason why some homeless people are reluctant to go in the Wheeler Mission is because of its rules. As Michael claimed,

“...there is only one shelter [for homeless people] in the city, Wheeler Mission, and it’s overflowing because you always got people going there...and once you are there, they do not encourage you to get out, because there’s money; they got funding based on how many people. At Wheeler, you can’t come and go as you please. You have to stay in there a certain time; even if you have just a mat on the floor, you can’t leave before the morning or you lose your mat and stuff. Now they are enforcing their baggage limit. I have too much baggage to go in, plus I have all those blankets and stuff, so I can’t carry on all that stuff and go into the Mission. I have to leave it behind somewhere and lose it...”

In the same tone as Michael, Maurice also commented:

“So, a shelter is a place you should to go to if you want an emergency shelter, [but], because it’s a religious private shelter, they hinder people. If you are Muslim, gay or an atheist they are not gonna let you in. That shouldn’t be like that. The shelter should for everybody who is in an emergency situation. I shake my head. If people need help, help them; just help them. That’s the right thing to do. It hurts me that they do that. And when they ask people for donations, the people give money and they don’t know what they are doing. That’s not good at all. And then their policy, at the Wheeler Mission, hinders homeless people like me, Michael, everybody who carries around their belongings. We can’t get in because of our stuff. You know if it’s too cold, you should be able to get a place to sleep, but they want you to throw away our stuff. That’s funny you got an agency that helps homelessness, but their policy conflicts with homelessness life style. It’s very weird.”

Funding issues related to shelters and to the service providers was one that Maurice, Michael and other homeless people I interviewed took very seriously. If we look at the annual report of all the agencies that deal with the issue of homelessness, there are always two similar reports describing funding or budget issues. First, and this is maybe the nature of any non-profit organization's management, the expense budget is always higher than the revenue and grant support they receive. Second, there is always an imbalance between the budget which is allocated to payroll expenses and employee benefits compared to operational and services that directly benefit homeless people.

For example, the HealthNet System that supports Homeless Initiative Program (HIP) and other related programs, in its 2011-2012 Annual Report, received \$45.3 million revenue and grant support, but spent \$47.9 million for its all expenses. From this budget, 63.4% was allocated for payroll expenses, only 4% was for purchased services, 3% was for medical or other supplies, and the rest of the budget was spent for administrative activities and facilities or equipment expenses. The following diagrams (charts 3.1 and 3.2) are the comparison of budget reports from the two biggest service providers for homeless people in Indianapolis.

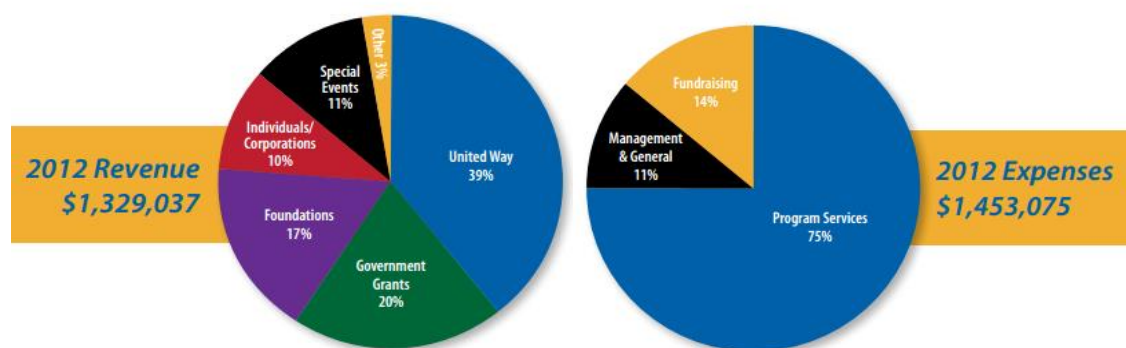


Chart 3.1 The Horizon House's annual budget report (Source: Horizon House, Annual Report 2012)



Chart 3.2 The HIP annual budget report (Source: HealthNet's HIP Annual Report 2011-2012)

### 3.3. "Anti-Homeless" Rules

The National Coalition for Homelessness (NCH) noted that the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act which was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan on July 22, 1987, and which was then renamed the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (PL100-77) by President William Clinton on October 30, 2000, is the first and remains the only major federal legislative response to homelessness (NCH 2006). As a landmark legislation concerning the plight of the homeless, this law has authorized a variety of services for the homeless, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, job training, primary health care, education, and housing programs. However, red tape, budget cuts, and the magnitude of the homeless problem have hampered its efficacy in addressing homelessness (Liese 2006: 1415).

In the State and city level, this federal legislation has been considered ineffective due to the way that state and city governments commonly deal with the issue of



homelessness. In this case, for example, many state and city governments have responded to the problems caused by homelessness by criminalizing certain conduct commonly associated with homelessness, such as begging, sleeping or camping in public, and loitering (Liese 2006: 1416). Before I truly engaged with the issue of homelessness, I did not realize that some of those common activities associated with the homeless are illegal in the eyes of city lawmakers in many cities throughout the United States. In Indianapolis, according to the City-County General Ordinance No. 25, 2010, Code Section 407-103, the first offense of loitering in a calendar year will be fined with a \$50.00 civil penalty (figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3 “Anti-Homeless” rules and restrictions in Downtown area of Indianapolis (photos by Karim 2014).

Based on my interviews with homeless informants, there are some other rules that make the homeless peoples’ lives even more difficult. Brigitte, for example, who always

sits down in front of Starbucks Coffee on the Monument Circle (figure 3.4) was required by the city official to have a retail merchant license for her activities of making and selling knitted works while she also does panhandling to pay for staying in a hotel during the night. Interestingly, a couple of months ago, CHIP established donation boxes at a spot she has been using to sit down and in some other strategic places in the downtown area. Now, she has to compete with donation boxes to get money from anybody who passes by Monument Circle.

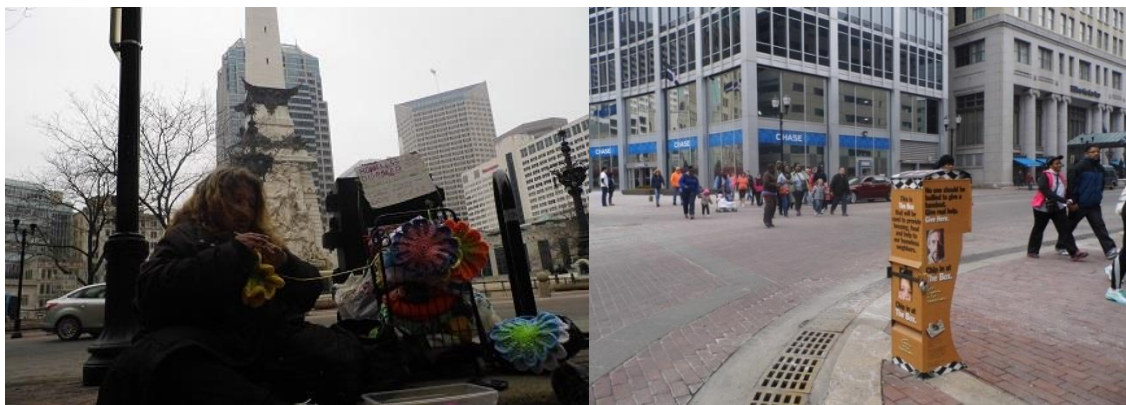


Figure 3.4 Homeless woman (with her knitting) competes with a CHIP's donation box (on her left side) to get support from the pedestrians in Monument Circle, Indianapolis (photos by Karim 2014)

Another homeless man has been banned from coming and using any facilities in the IUPUI campus library because he is considered mentally ill. Moreover, Maurice knows of at least seven additional restrictions discouraging the homeless from being downtown:

- If people carry bags or backpacks into Circle Centre Mall, they have approximately 15 minutes to make a purchase before they are asked to leave;
- Certain downtown restaurants will offer people a small discount if homeless people take their food to-go;
- If people doze off at the public library, they are asked to leave, and if this happens twice they will be banned for a year;



- Standing in front of the public library, even on the sidewalk or on the library steps is illegal;
- Various stores in the downtown area will not let people use their restrooms without a purchase;
- The city has only issued 1 (one) permit for serving food to the Pour House, a non-profit organization that focuses on establishing relationships and a sense of community with individuals experiencing homelessness in Indianapolis (figure 3.5). All other individuals, groups, or organizations are prohibited from serving food without a permit;
- If people hold a sign or shake a cup requesting donations in the downtown area (which is legal), they are ticketed \$25.00 but the second ticket will be \$ 2,500.00 (Morris, et al. v City of Indianapolis).



Figure 3.5 A feeding service for homeless people in the University Park by the Pour House (photo by Karim, winter 2014)

### **3.4. The Central Library and the IUPUI Library as “New Day Shelters for the Homeless”**

#### *The Central Library*

The Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library is the community’s place to access essential information resources, technology, programs and services; foster reading and learning and promote the social, economic, recreational, and lifelong learning interests of its diverse population. (The Library Board’s Mission Statement, November 20, 2008: Berry and Gadski, 2011: ix)

In order to document the history of the Indianapolis Marion County Public Library (the Central Library), the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library Foundation has published two official books about its history since first opening in April 9, 1873: *A Live Thing in the Whole Town: The History of the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library 1873-1990* by Lawrence J. Downey (1991) and *Stacks: A History of the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library* by S.L. Berry Marry Ellen Gadski (2011). The initial effort to address the issue of homelessness in the Central Library can be found in the second book, which says that the era of 1980s was the beginning of the emergence of the issue of homelessness in the public library due to the closing of several state-funded mental institutions.

Even though the author only describes this issue briefly (less than one page), September 29, 1987, was a crucial moment where Raymond Gnat (the library’s director from 1972-1994) wrote a memorandum to the Homeless Service Providers Networks saying that the Central Library publicly offered to work with any agency that would provide daytime shelter to the homeless. He even promised to allocate funds from the library’s budget to provide reading materials and enrolled the Central Library as a member

of the local Homeless Service Providers Networks. One year later, he realized his promise and stocked a reading room at Wheeler Mission (Berry and Gadski, 2011: 185).

During this period of time, especially in September 1987, the library's involvement to the issue of homelessness in the downtown area of Indianapolis coincided with the effort of the Homeless Network of Indianapolis, in cooperation with the United Way/Community Service Council, the City of Indianapolis, the Office of the Mayor, the Department of Metropolitan Development and All Saints Episcopal Church in establishing a list of priorities for addressing the problem of homelessness in Indianapolis. Based on this effort, they concluded that the top priority for services for the homeless was a need for a daytime multi-service agency that could help coordinate the many services offered to homeless individuals around the city. From this priority, the Indianapolis Day Center then opened as the daytime multi-service agency on November 21, 1988, managed by the Salvation Army in cooperation with Shepherd Community Center. By 1994, the Day Center was renamed to Horizon House, which has a connection with the United Way of Central Indiana, to formulate a longer term of day services for the homeless (Horizon House 2011: 3). Now, Horizon House is considered as the only homeless day shelter in the city that is not faith-based.

Since then, as reported by Whyde (1987) in *The Indianapolis Star*, homelessness has continued to be a concern, studies and ideas for solutions have been proposed periodically by civic leaders, and the City-County Council has passed ordinances limiting homelessness related activities like panhandling and requiring a city permit for agencies operating a feeding program in city parks or other public spaces. Reasoning that "only a small percentage of the Central's homeless visitors caused problems," the best way that

the Central Library was able to deal with issue of homelessness was to insist on behavioral standards and to enforce them (Berry and Gadski, 2011: 185). One testimonial from a senior staff member, Daniel Fast, that shows the importance of the public library building for the homeless was noted in the book about the Central Library's history and said: "One man who'd been coming to the library for 10 years and was well known by the staff died of a heart attack while there one day, and it was fitting, because this was as much a home to him as anywhere" (Whyde 1987; as cited in Berry and Gadski 2011: 185).

Interestingly, as Maurice said, this period was also crucial for homelessness in Indianapolis because the then-City Mayor, William Herbert Hudnut III was "friendly" to homeless people. As a result, there were not only rising concerns from the Central Library about the issue of homeless and the establishment of the Indianapolis Day Center (now Horizon House), but also the introduction of a broader initiative in 1988 aimed at addressing the issue of homelessness through the Homeless Initiative Program (HIP).

HIP is a multidisciplinary effort composed of a primary medical care team, social workers for case management, street or community outreach workers, and an education or job placement team. Under the *HealthNet* system, a non-profit primary care health service supporting primarily low-income and medically underserved communities, HIP has become the largest and most comprehensive care program for the homeless in the state whose funding partners include the City of Indianapolis, the United Way of Central Indiana, IU Health, the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis, Methodist Health Foundation, Health & Hospital Corporation of Marion County, Chase Bank and Purpose Built Communities (HealthNet 2013).

One of the reasons why Mayor Hudnut paid more attention to the issue of homelessness during his four terms (the city's longest serving mayor) was his background as a clergyman who had served churches in Buffalo, New York, Annapolis, Maryland, and Indianapolis. He was an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church and the senior pastor of Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis from 1964 to 1972 (Bodenhamer and Barrows 1994: 1247). He is also well known as the author of several books, namely *Minister Mayor* (1987), *The Hudnut Years in Indianapolis, 1976-1991* (1995), *Cities on the Rebound* (1998), and *Halfway to Everywhere: a Portrait of America's First-tier Suburbs* (2003).

In 2010, he wrote a book review of the *Revolution and Renewal: How Churches Are Saving Our Cities* by Tony Campolo (Westminster John Knox Press) in which he offers an appreciation of the role of faith-based institutions in solving some of the problems deeply ingrained by the plight of urban America, such as crime, homelessness, urban blight, disintegrating families, teen-aged prostitutes, growing joblessness, racial conflict, and the alienated elderly (Hudnut 2010). The most important book he wrote about homelessness was titled *Homelessness in Indianapolis: a report of the Homeless Task Force*, published by the Community Service Council of Central Indiana in 1987.

Moreover, the *Blueprint of Indianapolis Continuum of Care*, the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (CHIP) notes that the effort of ending homelessness in Indianapolis can be back to 1987, when Mayor Hudnut appointed a 45-member Housing Task Force to coordinate the efforts addressing the issue of housing and homelessness as a community priority. This year was also a period when United Way's Community Service Council conducted a homeless study focused on service delivery and

shelter bed availability. Indianapolis Homeless Network was one of the direct results from the work of the Housing Task Force whose main job was to create coordination between service providers resulting in the Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership. In 1996, when the number of homeless people was growing dramatically, the Housing Task Force conducted another study of homelessness called Community Service Council study and created CHIP as the primary information source and planning body for homeless issues, replacing the former Indianapolis Homeless Network (CHIP 2012).

Most of my ethnographic explorations within the Central Library were conducted during the winter 2013/2014. I began with couple of weeks of observations in the beginning of winter while I was waiting for my IRB approval for the official interviews with homeless people and the library-staff. Since the summer 2013, I have been visiting the Central Library at least once a week with my wife and my 3-year-old son to read books, work on class assignments, play games, do artwork and other kid stuff in *Learning Curve*, a children's learning center located in the second floor that is directly connected to the lobby of the library. During that summer I was not really paying attention to the appearance or presence of homeless people in the Central library but I can still remember that there were always some people coming to the library carrying big bags or plastic bags, and sitting down for long hours in some chairs or benches in the lobby.

In August 2013, I asked someone at the information desk for the name of someone who is responsible or knows the issues or programs related to homelessness in the Central Library. He gave me a name and the email address of one of the managers to whom I could talk. In the beginning of September 2013, I talked to Cheryl Wright, an area resource manager, who then provided me with some other contact numbers of the agencies

that are working with the library to address the issue of homelessness. During the winter I began asking short questions of the library staff members about their perceptions and experiences dealing with what they call “street people” in the Central Library. They told me that I should talk to Joan Harvey, one of the senior staff members, who has been involved with some of the agencies and is known as the caretaker of the issue of homelessness within the Central Library for at least the past five years.

During the winter, before I had my interview with Joan, I tried many times to approach the homeless men or women or anybody whom I considered to be a homeless person. Even though I always used a word like “learn” or “talk” instead of “interview” when approaching them, my efforts mostly ended with a refusal. One day, on the weekend when the library closed earlier at 5:00 pm, after I failed trying to officially interview an old, white homeless man on the 6th floor (figure 3.6), I decided not to approach other homeless people on other floors. Instead I waited for the old man outside the library building and later followed him, riding my bicycle from a distance, wondering about where he lived. Right when the library was closing, I saw him go out of the library building with another homeless man, a younger African American guy, each of them carrying a big backpack and some full plastic bags. It was a day with the thickest snow of the week and some of the sidewalks were covered by the snow.



Figure 3.6 Some spaces in the Central Library that have been “privatized” by homeless people (Photos by Karim 2014)

A couple of blocks from the library building, I realized where they were going and what their destination was. They went to Military Park located around 1 mile from the central library. It was an emotional sight for me when I saw that the old white guy was left behind by his friend and was staggering as he approached the gazebo (figure 3.7), located in the middle of the park. All of the sidewalks and areas around the gazebo were covered by 10-12 inches of snow. At that time, I did not know that Maurice had been living there since the eviction of the Irish Hill Homeless camp, and Michael claimed this place as his “home”.





Figure 3.7 The gazebo in Military Park, the “night home” for some homeless people in Indianapolis (Photos by Karim, 2014)

Based on my interviews with Joan and Cheryl, they revealed that of the total number of library visitors during the winter, 40-50% were homeless or had no permanent housing. The majority of the homeless are men rather than women (and of the women, many of them are young girls rather than adults or seniors); a lot of the homeless men are African American, and some are Hispanic, but there are very few Asians in this population. Even though some of the homeless responded that the percentage of the homeless population is not that high, Joan convinced me with what she called “area trips” and observations that she does regularly to prove that number. She had been working at the Central Library for 36 years when I engaged her in a conversation about the issue of homelessness:

“Well, I really only kind of got involved in this part of it maybe about 5 year ago or so. I lived downtown and walked through every day, so I thought I knew everything about downtown living and people, including homeless people in Indianapolis, and then one day our security manager had a gentlemen from CHIP come in who talked to us; and I realized after he talked to us that there were a lot of things I didn’t know. So I went up to him afterwards and I said, “What can the library do to help, because since we opened, we never really been concerned about homeless people?” Before that I had never done anything. Then I went to the library management and luckily we had a room that wasn’t being used up on the 3rd floor—room 311—and they said you can have that room. People and the outreach team could come in when they wanted to talk to somebody and with a private space to talk, that would be helpful. So, the first couple years, the outreach team really used

that room a lot; they would have workshops; they had different things in there. But then, a couple years ago people started having funding problems, so the outreach team pretty much had to concentrate on doing the most they could with their time and resources. They didn't have any extra time and extra staff."

Since then, she has become more involved and has gotten to know a lot of the outreach teams, agencies, and the service providers. She has become really active with CHIP and in many cases represents the Central Library in meetings with those agencies. She was the representative of the Central Library in creating the document of *The Blueprint to End Homelessness* and its Strategic Plan coordinated by CHIP. Joan also tries to educate the rest of the staff and her co-workers in the Central Library to help them to be more aware and understanding of the situations of the homeless in Indianapolis. As she said:

"...this recent cold weather, we've been doing a lot of kinds of duties, [like] clothing drives among the staff, and asked people to bring stuff in and I give it to Pour House or Horizon house. So, we're kind of doing our own outreach."

One thing she admits from her experience working more than three decades in the library is that she wants to make sure that both the staff members and the homeless feel more comfortable in the library because a lot of the library employees in the past were not comfortable dealing with people who are homeless. She even tried to learn more about this issue. For example, she mentioned that the San Francisco Public Library was the first library in the country to have an embedded social worker to help the homeless. She had spoken to the person from the San Francisco Public Library, and she has been trying to imitate what has been done there. Some of these are simple matters, like employing people who go around the restrooms and keep them tidy. If they see someone who looks like they need help, they would go to and talk to them. After implementing this program five years ago, Joan knows many of the homeless by name. She knows what they usually do, where

they live, which floors and spots they stay at, what days, where and from which organizations they get food and other necessities, and which person can be asked to talk or not.

Based on Joan's 36-year experience working in the Central Library, she argued that there are two main reasons why the number of homeless people in the public library is always growing. The first reason is the 1994 closure of the Central State Hospital, which was the mental health hospital on the West side of Indianapolis. She immediately saw a big change in the number of homeless or people with mental health issues who frequented the Central Library that year, when the building was still located at the old City Hall building between Alabama and Ohio Street. The second reason is what she called the "discovery" of the library building by the homeless. During the renovations and improvements of the existing library buildings from 2001 through 2005, the Central Library was moved to the old City Hall building located at Alabama and Ohio Street. This area is very close to both the Marion City County building and to some of the homeless mission buildings that are always overflowing. As a result, many homeless people found that the public library could give them a roof over their heads, to keep their bodies warm during the winter and protect them from the sun and heat in the summer.

Joan used the term "on track," term she borrowed from her friend in the San Francisco Public Library, to describe what she has done over the past 5 years. Her main accomplishment at the Indianapolis Central Library is that there is no rule or policy banning homeless people from accessing the library's facilities. Although many homeless people do not apply for a library card, in the case that they do, they can use the shelter's address. If they lived on the street or in a campsite, Joan used to help them personally and

tries to connect them with other homeless individuals who have a shelter address. The Central Library also offers free computer classes, and a job center which is open on Mondays and Fridays in the computer lab.

Even though these programs are not intended specifically for homeless people, the two library staff members and one trainer, Douglas, to whom I talked, agreed that the majority of the visitors are low income people with high school or General Educational Development (GED) educational background and the homeless. There are 36 computers, two printers, and a scanner in the Computer Lab and 12 computers and a printer in the job training center room. The Computer Lab is located on the first floor and the job center room is separated on the left side in a smaller room because it has different rules. The computers in the job training room can only be used for job related purposes, but people can do anything including watching movies, chatting, playing games, and listening to music whenever they want outside this territory. The Computer Lab also offers a flash drive (its box says: “made in Indonesia!”) for saving documents (résumés, photographs, and scanned materials), and at any time, there is always assistance from the library staff for anyone who utilizes these facilities. The visitors to the Computer Lab come from across Indiana—in fact, many of them from suburban areas around Indianapolis, —but the job center room is mostly utilized by Marion County residents. Based on racial status or ethnic identity, about 75% of them are African American, less than 5% are Hispanic or Asian, and the rest are white. Within each group, there is a similar ratio of men and women, with men far outnumbering women.

Interestingly, job training in the Central Library does not provide or train people with specific skills for specific jobs. Instead, it offers facilities and assistance for applying

for jobs, writing résumés, and finding jobs, for example through the website *indeed.com* which is recommended very often by the trainer. Labor and environmental services are two common jobs for which the visitors usually apply. Douglas said that about 25% of the visitors in his class are unemployed homeless, and the rest of others are partially employed but not homeless or people with low income. His main job is dealing with job searches and since he has been working as a tutor or trainer in the job training center room for three years, he has gotten only two reports from people whom he knew were homeless, who came back to the Computer Lab and told him that they had found jobs. Seven to twelve people came to the job center room twice a week, but whether the rest got jobs or moved to other places was unknown due to the fact that they did not return.

As far as he knew, most of the homeless people who come to the Computer Lab were staying at Wheeler Mission. Some of them had had applied for jobs 10 or 20 times, then never came back or gave any further information about their employment. One of the challenges faced by trainers like Douglas, especially from what I could see as a participant observer during the job training session, was that everybody in the classroom needed assistance, but some of the participants did not have the patience to wait until they got help. Another resource that is regularly used by homeless people in the Central Library is a cheap phone located in the lower level, right across from the computer lab.

Using the example of the San Francisco Public Library with its embedded social worker to help the homeless, Joan says that her ultimate goal is to have professional social workers in the Central Library. In my interview with Maurice, he argued that the Central Library should do more than what it has been doing. He also agreed that a public library in a city like Indianapolis should have a staff who focuses on dealing with homeless people:

“The social room in the public library should be an office for a social worker. This person must be a very competent person regarding resources and customer service oriented. They don’t need to be biased in any way. For example, somebody is coming to the library who is homeless or facing homelessness, needs information first and resources second. So, a conversation needs to happen first, because the situation may be resolved within the conversation. I need to see and understand what your situation is about before sending you to the Horizon house or Wheeler. If the Central Library could reduce the number of security guards then maybe they could take that funding for a salary for a social worker.”

Moreover, according to the Central Library’s code of behavior, there is no discrimination against any type of visitors. However, because it has a coffee shop in its lobby, people do not always realize that they can have food everywhere except at the computers, and if they are at a computer with a drink, they have to have a lid. In this case, it is sometimes difficult for the homeless because they always bring their belongings wherever they go, including their food and water. With people who are caught sleeping, they do not get thrown out of the library unless they are always going there for that purpose. The security guards who are mostly women, will wake them up with a number of ways, like shaking keys, making a noise, and telling them to walk around a little bit. The guards have also been trained on how to touch somebody who is sleeping and wake them up. They wake people up three times and after that, they can ask them to leave for the day. Since her engagement with CHIP and other agencies, Joan admitted that she personally does not call the guards and she just lets the homeless people sleep. There are other rules that are intended to keep the library safe for everyone, such as no pornography on the computers, no smoking, and no showering in the restrooms. If the staff person or guard walks into the restrooms and finds someone doing laundry or taking a bath, they are asked to leave the library.

Finally, considering the location and the facilities, the Central Library is just a “perfect” spot for homeless people. It is located very close to a lot of places where people can walk, ride a bike, reach a bus line, go for help, and everything they want to do around the downtown area of Indianapolis. It also has facilities, especially computers with high speed internet access, that make the homeless person, who might have nothing to do during the day, feel at home staying in the library. As Joan says:

“...I’ve had other people in the community that say, and the service providers, they will refer to us as ‘you’re the big day shelter upon Meridian Street’, because basically we are, and that’s fine, as long as everybody obeys the rules, that is perfectly fine.”

#### *The IUPUI Library*

Before I met Michael, who claimed that he has been coming to the IUPUI Library since he was a teenager, I was not really interested in whether the homeless used the IUPUI Library or what their activities might be if they did, because my focus was only on the Central Library. However, I then found a common thread between the stories of homeless people in both libraries and their relationship to the closing of the Irish Hill Homeless camp. My engagement with Maurice’s activism and with Dr. Mary Provence’s class on Social Welfare and Practice in the Indiana University School of Social Work led me to consider homeless people’s use of the IUPUI Library. One of the clues that I got from my exploration was that almost all of the homeless people who usually come and use the facilities in the Central Library met or had contact with Maurice when he was a “mayor” of the Irish Hill homeless camp. As it turns out, Maurice knows almost everybody who is homeless in both of the libraries.

Unlike the Central Library, the IUPUI Library was originally intended to serve the campus community, not the general public. It has no record of activities, programs, or

initiatives related to the issue of homelessness. It also has no specific rules or restrictions that are “designed” to deal with the homeless people. An interesting realization I had is how Maurice and other homeless people, who come and use the facilities in the IUPUI Library on a daily basis, envisage the library. Maurice, especially, calls the IUPUI Library a “new Horizon House,” considering the space and time availability, similar facilities, including computers and internet access, printers, restrooms, microwave, cafeteria, napping spaces, meeting spots, and food provided by some churches and organizations that come to the library.

It is a collaboration between Maurice and Dr. Provence that has given Maurice an opportunity to speak out and to promote his ideas about an Indiana Homeless Bill of Rights to the students and other member of the academic community. As a result, the IUPUI Library has become a kind of an alternative “learning center” about the issue of homelessness in Indianapolis. There are not only homeless people coming to the library and looking for help from Maurice, but also meetings between Maurice and Dr. Provence and her students, and also with other parties such as organizations, churches, or individuals from a wide range of social and educational backgrounds interested in discussing the issue of homelessness in Indianapolis with Maurice. One of the favorite places for those meetings in the IUPUI Library is on the lower level of the library building where there is a cafeteria, nice couches, and more importantly a more comfortable atmosphere with less traffic and activities than on other floors.

Moreover, the collaboration between Dr. Provence and Maurice has also led me to think about the importance of “knowledge sharing” in addressing social problems. On the one hand, students gain new insights and experience by working together with the



homeless. On the other hand, Maurice's activism, and the homeless' voices get academic "recognition" that has led him to feel more confident about what he has been doing. When I asked Dr. Provence about a possible role of the public library having professional staff members who deal with homeless people, she said:

“...I think it's a good idea and social work would be the right profession in the public library to deal with the homeless, but I think it has to continue to feed out. Probably, if you are really to go that far, you really have to have two of them, male and female, because throughout what you are doing, there are certain different issues.”

Based on this point, regarding the facilities that can be accessed by the homeless and the restrictions, compared to the availability and the situation of the “real” emergency shelters in Indianapolis, the Central Library and the IUPUI Library can be considered as “new day shelters” for the homeless. Certainly, not all types of homeless people feel comfortable staying at either of the library buildings, but for those who have no problem with alcohol, no drug addiction, no mental illness, and no criminal record, the library is absolutely a “more convenient” place to stay rather than in homeless shelters.

## **Chapter 4**

### **PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND HOMELESS ACTIVISM**

#### **4.1. Homeless Activism: From the Campsites to the Library Buildings**

As Spradley (1979: 25) has pointed out, “the success of doing ethnography depends, to a great extent, on understanding the nature of the relationship between ethnographers and informants to produce a cultural description”. I realized that building relationships with homeless informants is a complex process; when I first began my fieldwork, I became very frustrated about how to make homeless people willing to talk with me. As time went by, once I was able to make friends with one of the homeless individuals, the snowballing approach began working effectively. It was not easy to engage them in conversation at first because they did not really know who I was, even when I introduced myself and showed my legal identification. Trust is the keyword and one of the first ways to build trust is by approaching somebody who is not homeless but who is close to their “life circle,” such as an outreach manager or staff member of one of the agencies, people from churches, and a few Central Library staff members. Some of the homeless people whom I talked to without a referral or endorsement from people they knew were willing to talk to me, but later I realized that they were not telling me the truth; for example when I asked about where they lived, they did not admit to me that they were actually homeless.

Based on my ethnographic investigation, I found that there were the stories of the homeless people who were in the Central Library and those who were in the IUPUI Library were interrelated. Most of them were connected to each other through contact with the Irish Hill Homeless Camp and its “mayor,” Maurice Young. This was especially true when they used to gather at the “block party” that was held every Sunday afternoon, where

67 residents of the camp, along with other homeless people from other homeless camps and around the city, got together to obtain food, clothing, medication, and other necessities from churches, service providers, and organizations that focus on helping the homeless. Many kinds of homeless people, including those who have problems with mental illness, alcohol, drugs, and criminal backgrounds, can be found in the Central Library because it is the only indoor public space that has almost no restrictions as compared to, for example, the Indiana State Library or other public buildings. It is also located just a couple of blocks from Wheeler Mission and some of the churches that provide food for them, including feeding programs conducted by the Pour House and other agencies in the two main city parks right across from the library buildings. I found that some of the homeless people who utilize the IUPUI Library are more educated than others; for example, most of them have jobs, and advocate an anti-shelter lifestyle.

In discussing homeless activism, I used the title “leaving the bridges, passing the shelters.” The idea behind this title refers to complicated issues faced by homeless people both in the campsites (especially in the case of the Irish Hill homeless camp), and in the homeless emergency shelters. The main reason homeless people are organizing and engaging in homeless activism may be a form of protest against the ways the homeless emergency shelters are supposedly “helping” the homeless. There are some crucial facts I discovered beyond the “shelters’ dilemma” (as I discussed in the earlier chapter). I categorized two main triggers that have inspired homeless people, especially in the case of Maurice Young, to engage in activism in the form of fighting for passage of an “Indiana Homeless Bill of Rights”. The first one is that they were inspired by other states (Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Illinois) that have already passed the Homeless Bill of

Rights. Maurice learned information about these bills mostly from a computer in the IUPUI Library. The second reason was because of the experiences faced by homeless people, including the eviction of the homeless campsites (especially when they have to leave a place they considered “home” such as the Irish Hill bridge), dealing with the emergency shelters, and finding themselves in difficulties because of the limited availability of public spaces due to “anti-homeless rules and policies” in Indianapolis.

Above all, it is important to note that both the Central Library and the IUPUI Library have become favorite spaces for homeless people to use as “alternative day shelters”, not only because they are also forced to leave the real shelters, but also because they found that the library buildings “give” them space they can use to organize their activism.

In this context, I will discuss some examples of homeless people who live neither in shelter nor in campsites, but in the gazebo of Military Park during the night, and who have “privatized” spots on specific floors in the Central Library, as well as establishing their own “office” in the IUPUI Library where they can actualize their own ideas about homeless activism. Military Park is an interesting place because it is located a little distance away from the crowded business traffic in downtown Indianapolis, but still within easy walking distance both to the Central Library and the IUPUI Library. It is a safe and quiet place surrounded by the IUPUI campus buildings, the downtown canal and the Indiana State Government building.

#### **4.2. Michael “The Writer”**

After I had tried and failed many times to interview homeless people in the Central Library, due to their reluctance to talk with strangers, I got connected for the first time

with Michael after I had an interview with Joan who introduced me to him. She gave me some names of homeless people, along with their Facebook accounts, their favorite spots, and their daily routine in the library. At this point, I realized that social media plays an important role in today's ethnographic research (see Zimmerman, Singleton and Welch 2010: 449-451 for a discussion of blogs in relation to homelessness). I had my first conversation with Michael through Facebook. As he wrote in our first exchange,

“You must be the man whom Joan Harvey told me about. Glad to make your acquaintance. I am available to talk to anytime here at the library...My camp is the one in the gazebo in Military Park across the street from the Law School at IUPUI. I used to go to the IUPUI Library for 34 years now till I got banned from the campus on July 4th by three homeless hateful officers to keep me out of the library. Perhaps I should send you some of my writings, not all are on my blog that will tell you more about my personal homelessness and make your questions better...”

Michael was born and raised by his adopted parents in Brownsburg, Indiana. Since his very early childhood, he had never met or even known who his biological parents were. When I first talked to him, he was 51 and had never been married but he had attended three different colleges; Martin University, IUPUI, and Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana. He never finished a degree. He worked at various kinds of jobs, and for his most recent employment, he was a driver at Papa John's Pizza for fifteen years before he finally lost his job again. Later, another informant told me about Michael's struggle dealing with diabetes, and with some degree of depression, and other physical challenges as a result of living outside for a long period of time. His illnesses require medication but he says that he does not really care. Fortunately, he still has access to the SNAP (food stamp) program and to medications from service providers. He wrote a poem posted in his blog page in May 8, 2012 about his identity:

A Tribute to My Unknown Ancestors Who Are Wrongly Called “The Indians” or “The Red Race”

No European King here ruled or wielded his mace,  
but Kings there were, Lords of the Chase.  
Who caught bison, deer, and birds by the brace,  
who with bows, arrows, spears, bolos, and guns shot like an ace.  
The Sons and Daughters of the Forests, Mountains, Plains, and Deserts of this place,  
most did live lives of simplicity and grace.

Our God we worshiped with songs in voices of soprano and bass,  
We danced with our colorful “war paint” on our face,  
while our beautiful dances went from slow to fast pace.

No table in our house had a Chinese vase,  
nor was a table covered in fancy lace.  
No china, silverware, or crystal goblets did we uncase,  
but valuable morals, manners, and oneness with Nature in our hearts did we encase.

Whites, you say our morals and beliefs you do embrace,  
but our languages and history you do deface.  
By stealing and selling to tourists, our art you debase,  
since your ancestors first came here and their shoes did unlace,  
you have constantly stolen and polluted our space.

Alas, some think we vanished without a trace,  
because our trusting minds you did outpace.  
We wish we could our historical steps retrace.

But, Remember, O White Man: though you stole our land without a case,  
and our precious people you did displace,  
and our languages with English you did replace,  
That Our Blood You Never Can Erase!

He considers himself an “unhoused” person, rather than a homeless person,  
because he argues that homelessness refers to people who are disconnected from society.  
He believes that he has a right to stay in Military Park because it is a public space and he  
still pays taxes. He feels he has never been disconnected from society because he still  
votes, goes to church, and has many friends outside the homeless community. He became  
homeless because he had a house mortgage he inherited from his father who died in 1997,  
his car broke down and he lost his job. As he conceded:

“I became homeless not because I don’t have family or because I am doing  
things that I shouldn’t be doing; I became homeless because I am stupid and I can’t  
care about other people. I just reached a point where [I did not want to pay], like the  
mortgage or a refinance for thousands of dollars more without anything to get out of

it. Then, I reached a point where I think it was just beyond my control, and I don't have wife, I don't have family to help..."

He spends almost the whole day, seven days a week, in the Central Library. Unlike other homeless people who use the internet in the Central Library mainly for surfing, watching movies, or enjoying music videos, he created the blog page *Writing of Michael-Tyrrannis I Saurranho-Schwing* that can be accessed on a website <http://writingsofmichaelschwing.wordpress.com/>. In this blog, he categorizes his writings into various kinds of topics such as poetry, short stories, college papers, humor or sarcasm and homelessness. Even though his writings are sometimes difficult to understand, combined with the stories he revealed to me in my interview, he also expressed his concerns about racism, "dominant culture", citizen's rights, the homeless industry, and about the ways people treat the homeless based on stereotypes:

"There is a homeless industry...they get funding because they have 'x' number of people, and they will give the money per head based on the people that they serve. That's how they get more donations. They keep case management until we die on the street. Case managers get thousands of dollars of money. I did some research and I found that some of the top agencies were spending twenty million dollar a year, but they don't house people; if they house people they lose their jobs. They are needed, but they shouldn't do it that way. Maurice and I have the ability to get housing for people if we had the funding. We can have programs that would help all the homeless to get out of the street."

This following paragraph is one of the examples of his writing on homelessness, dated July 16, 2012 (posted on his blog on April 14, 2014 titled *Indianapolis, Indiana, Tests Homelessness Neutron Bomb (in the tradition of "The Onion")*).

Indianapolis, Indiana, was the scene this evening of the detonation of the first homelessness neutron bomb ever made and used. It is believed to have sent over 2000 homeless people to their permanent housing out of the streets. It must have been effective as this reporter could only find, at this time, surviving homeless persons who were sleeping in the IUPUI Library or on the computers in the IUPUI Library at the time of detonation.

This collaborative effort of HUD, the Department of Energy, CHIP, the Governor's Office, and NASA, Ed the Talking Horse, the Department of Defense, and Panda Express restaurant cost over 7.5 billion dollars. Among the comments from the homeless in the IUPUI Library which this reporter was given permission to publish were: Mark Zonderburgmeister said, "Yippee! More bags of food for me at the feedings!" Linda Pumperniklebred replied, "It should really make it easier to find campsites at the River, the Jungle, and Military Park. They were really getting crowded."

Penelope Nase-in-deine-Gesellschaft, a housed IUPUI German exchange student, well-known for speaking her mind on various causes, intruded into our conversation, "I think it would have been better to have used the 7.5 billion dollars to buy housing for the homeless and then connecting them to the services necessary provided by already existing trained service providers to stay housed. We could have housed thousands of families and eliminated homelessness in the top 10 most plagued Indiana cities." After being congratulated for actually reading the first "Blueprint to End Homelessness in Indianapolis", she was immediately made the Chair of the CHIP Homelessness Advocacy Council, of which only three members could still be found. "Chill Will" MacGillicuddy, holding his sign, "Why Lie. It's for beer!" asked if someone would put some money in his cup so he could go to the liquor store and get some "gin medication to self-celebrate."

Another CHIP Homelessness Advocacy Council member (English name with-held by request, but his Dinarisian name is Tavran Saurranno, but you didn't hear it from me) stated he was glad to see in this day of various levels of governments, private donors, and massive non-profits downsizing their donations to every cause including homelessness, that one governmental program to help the homeless is still getting major funding: the "Keep the Homeless in Case Management Till They Die in the Street and We Commemorate Them at the Homeless Memorial Service Program". He stated further, "It makes me really proud as a native of Indianapolis and Indiana to know that we have more than corn and sports in Indiana: we also have compassion for our fellow human beings and wish them the best, especially the homeless who will be helped by this new final solution. (All the more, since the powers that be keep refusing to let me build a Soylent Green factory in Indianapolis and make the homeless, geese, sewer rats, squirrels and rabbits useful). This reporter will keep you readers apprised of future developments of this story.

Another longer article he posted in March 9, 2014, is titled *My paper for a Sociology Class at Ivy Tech: Why Are There Still Homeless People in Indianapolis?*

In this article, he tells a story about his experiences, shares his point of view about homelessness, and discusses related issues in the city of Indianapolis. There are other various issues related to homelessness he wrote based on his personal experiences



including *The Causes and Effects of My Homelessness* that was written for his English class when he was a student at Martin University. When I asked to whom his writings are specifically directed, he said:

“People will read my writings who already know the kinds of things I write like homeless, church, family, friends, and cousins. The blog is to collect them all in one spot and bring them to others who do not know me. I first publish my things on Facebook, but only a few people have access to that even though I have the minimum blocks on it.”

His activism as outlined in his writings and his engagement with CHIP and other service providers has led him to become a vice chair of the Homelessness Advocacy Council of Indianapolis, an organization of homeless and formerly homeless persons interested in helping to end homelessness in Indianapolis. As Michael points out, the Council’s goals are to point out overlaps in services or gaps in services, to promote best ideas in services and resources, and to take the information on available services and resources to those in need in order to help enable them to leave homelessness behind as quickly as possible. The council does not provide direct services, but can make referrals or recommend some services and can help locate resources. He also became a representative of the homeless population, helping to complete the latest version of the document, *Blueprint to End Homelessness in Indianapolis* in 2013.

Unfortunately, even though he was granted an important position which enabled him to contribute input on behalf of homeless people, he was disappointed because there is nowhere in the *Blueprint* document that he can point to and say, "I said that". He believes that the document has many good ideas but that it could have been much better if they had attributed everything he contributed, especially from homeless individuals. What he always advocates is that the service providers and the agencies have to move beyond what

they have been doing and offer programs and services their clients need. Therefore, more input is needed from the people they serve. In many cases, even he has different point of view about homelessness and how to address this issue with CHIP; he is one of the most active homeless people and he usually attends meetings organized by CHIP and other agencies. In the last Blueprint Council meeting, he was not re-elected and since then, he has not been as active as he was when he was taking part in the council's discussions and meetings. In expressing his disappointment, he grumbled:

”...forty million dollars dumped into this city in the last few years and you cannot house me? It is not a matter of the amount of money but how it is being spent. Five million dollars for Wheeler Mission to add 100 beds! If Wheeler really wanted to add beds they can put 500 of them in the Delaware Street location for nothing more than the price of the beds and bedding which would have been donated to them anyway. With that 5 million dollars I could have housed two to three thousand people for the rest of their lives and not need a million dollars a year to stay running as Partners in Housing. I got a lot of blank and strange looks from people but they have no clue that there are people out there who know more than they do and can do more with less money than they have to waste.”

Michael invited me to join him in a Continuum of Care (CoC) meeting, which was held on April 29, 2014. This CoC is open to any interested persons followed by some committee meetings, including the Policy and Advocacy Council, on which he now serves.. I expected to see and hear Michael's stories in this meeting, but he seemed to be quiet and preferred to be a listener rather than a “protester” (figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1 Michael in the CoC Meeting (photo by Karim, 2014)

One thing that was interesting for me was the way the CoC committee explored the problems of homelessness in Indianapolis and gathered proposed solutions from the meeting participants using papers taped on the wall (figure 4.2). Looking at these pictures and learning the way how they reach what I call a “convention” to solve problems of homelessness, I found common “definitions” and “solutions” from the homeless as well as from the service providers’ perspectives. For example, majority of the meeting participants think that homeless people are unemployed and mentally and physically ill. Surprisingly, the “other” page (“new definitions” and “new proposed solutions”) was almost empty and ignored from their attention.



Figure 4.2 Proposed solutions for the problems of homelessness from the CoC Meeting 2014 (photo by Karim, 2014)

#### **4.3. Maurice “The Advocate” and “The Speaker”**

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others” (Mahatma Gandhi).

On April 16, 2014, I found this quote posted in a Facebook page on the *Indiana Homeless Bill of Rights*, which was created by 8 students in Mary Provence’s spring semester 2014 class on Social Welfare and Practice at IUPUI. There are some other quotes and information about homelessness in the USA that have been posted since this Facebook page was started but what I am sure about is that they are using this quote to describe or at least to tell people about Maurice Young, an African American homeless man, who has become their friend and teacher, as well as their working partner. Since I first met Maurice, I have talked with him, followed him to many different places where he gave presentations, and have become very close to his daily “activism” as a homeless person whose main job is to help other homeless people. He calls himself a “servant”, and I would argue that one of Gandhi’s life principles has been fused into Maurice’s mind and soul. Maslow’s diagram of the hierarchy of human needs that Maurice usually uses in his speeches and discussions, including in my first interview with him, shows his understanding of what he has been doing to serve homeless community, seven days a week and twenty four hours a day.

Michael is the one who initially connected me to Maurice almost immediately after my interview with him. I then realized why he called Maurice “the speaker” and how he really encouraged me to meet and talk to him to get a broader perspective on the issue of homelessness in Indianapolis. He believed, and I found he was right, that Maurice knows more about these issues than he does. He gave me Maurice’s cell phone number, told Maurice that I needed to meet him, and sent me a message that Maurice was waiting for

me on the third floor of the IUPUI Campus Library. Even though I used to go to the library, I did not realize that there is a spot on the third floor in the library that has been utilized by this homeless person for more than three years as his “private zone;” Maurice has called this area his “office” for more than three years. It is a strategic spot that has a “lobby” located near the elevator where he usually welcomes his guests, with dual-display computers that he uses for his *a-to-z* jobs, a printer and scanner located at the same table, double restrooms at the right and left side of this floor, and additional tables (on the left side of a spot he used to sit down) used to store his small camping bed (figure 4.3). Interestingly, panhandlers often have their sign saying “Homeless, please help, God bless;” he puts a different message on the sign on his table saying “Being Homeless is not a Crime”.



Figure 4.3 Maurice, his “office”, and his belongings at the IUPUI Library (Photos by Karim 2014)

Based on my interviews with him, I consider him to be an intellectual homeless man who became homeless based on his personal choice. He was born and raised on the west side of Indianapolis in what he considered a “good family”. In his childhood, he wanted to be a doctor, and he attended the magnet program at the Crispus Attucks High School but his home school was Northwest High School in Indianapolis. He never did drugs, nor did he smoke cigarettes, or use alcohol. After he realized that he could not deal with blood and other medical issues, he went to Ivy Tech State College where he completed two associate degrees, one in Business Administration and the other in Legal Studies. Then he transferred to Xavier University studying Psychology, Criminal Justice and Liberal Arts. With seven credit hours remaining to close out all three bachelor degrees Maurice’s financial aid ran out and he returned to Indianapolis. He had hoped to return and finish his degrees but “life” he said keeps moving him in a different direction.

He has married three times. He has a daughter and a step-son from his first wife. He worked in the entertainment businesses as an artist; he worked behind the scenes of his band, and then he also did artist management for more than ten years. He successfully produced comedians, models, actors, and singers, but then he focused more on contract and legal arrangements. In describing the last period of what he calls the “normal” life, he said:

“...[as] the internet and World Wide Web developed, the music industry nearly collapsed because many people moved to downloading digital files instead of buying the cassettes I had produced, like file sharing and pirating music and videos.”

He started a tax business and focused on medium size businesses for several years until he decided to open a non-profit business helping people who were released from jail and are preparing for their transition back into society. This moment became a turning

point for his awareness of and concern for marginalized communities around his neighborhood and the city. When his older daughter from his first marriage was 20, he and his third wife had a baby, which raised his awareness about the problems faced by children from low-income communities. Since then, he has created an annual summer camp in collaboration with one of the public schools in his neighborhood intended to help children who were considered troubled teens and high risk kids from low income family backgrounds. As he said:

“...one of the themes from the summer camp for very young kids from disadvantaged [family] background was to expose them to other things that they wouldn’t be exposed to like in a normal household. So, we would take kids to different places, to the opera, symphony, zoo, and museums, because in their home, they would never go to stuff like that, because they just don’t have enough money and time. Hopefully, as they moved to the school system, they can acknowledge something, they knew about more options...”

Based on these experiences, he was able to see the pattern in his life:

“When you try to help somebody, you want to help as much as you can, but then you notice that you only help them up to the point that it does not interfere with the things you have. Is this selfishness? Either I want to help or not. And I believe I really want to help so the best way to do that, for me, was to give up everything I had and see what I really had to offer. Now I consider everything I do – real help!”

One of my questions to him, which has also been asked by his big family and by other people who question his decision to totally leave his “normal life,” was “how about your family, your wife and kids? He said:

“As weird as this may sound....”I believe in good,” not as a concept but rather as a way of life. When I really started thinking about what is good, kind of the way Plato examines truth and justice, it became clear to me that with doing good came suffering. Troubling? Yes, but why do we focus on the suffering aspect of it and not the reward? Giving up my kids and family was indeed painful but I know and understand that the reward shall justify my decision in the end.”

Since the time he decided to become homeless and stayed in the Irish Hill homeless camp, he has changed a lot of people’s lives, and his family was happy with his



decision. His grandmother, who is now in her late 80s, was the first one in his family who came into the camp after she got news from television saying that her grandson had become a “mayor” of a homeless community. After that, his mother and his brother also came to the camp and saw what he was doing there. What he has always believed is that the foundation of serving and helping others will benefit his family and his children. For him, his decision to be homeless is one of the ways to escape from what he called the “material life” of the world. He can now see his life differently. For him, “life is not me, trying to take care of me; life is extending my self and helping other people, that’s what life, really is, because I realized one time, when you die you can’t take anything with you!”

In my interviews with him, he is always concerned with the intangible aspects of life. He usually underlines some keywords such as help, serve, respect, and integrity that he uses to see what life is really about. A simple example of what he calls “service works in its ways” is when told me that there is a guy who always brings a breakfast to the library for him every day.

In understanding homelessness, he thought that it just took a little to get people out of homelessness. Relationships are key, and getting to know people instead of throwing money at problems is what people should do as the first priority. Unlike many other homeless people, he is a highly educated man who has strong feelings about the lack of equal rights for the homeless. His passion to help others has led him to not only to leave his “normal life” but also since 2011 to make himself the “servant” of dozens of homeless people in the campsite, in the library, city parks, and on the streets. He began living in the Irish Hill homeless camp after staying for a while in Wheeler mission. There were only 9

homeless people when he first came to Irish Hill, but after two years, it had 67 residents and became a hub of homelessness in Indianapolis for more than two years.

During the 2012-2013 winter, he claims that without supports from the main sources of funding for the homeless programs in Indianapolis (the United Way, CoC, and CHIP), he was able to raise enough funds to pay for a building he calls a “day room” (figure 4.4) for the winter and to cover the utilities. Different restaurants provided breakfast, lunch and dinners. The churches also helped with food, transportation and other resources. All of the active outreach groups (the Horizon House, HIP, and Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department / IMPD and HVAF) came by as well.



Figure 4.4 A “day room” and its facilities during the winter 2012-2013 (photos by Maurice, 2013)

One of the reasons why he is always concerned about a day room for the homeless is that the service providers for the homeless have a time limitation to provide services, especially on the weekend. As he said:

“Because of our hours, we had a full house everyday! Over 300+ people everyday and we had a blast. We didn’t have showers though and a small bathroom. We were going to get it this winter but Wheeler rented before me.”

The day of eviction from the camp was the crucial moment when Maurice became famous throughout the city as a “mayor” of the camp, and he has appeared widely in newspapers, on television, and even on YouTube. Since then, what many people knew from the media was that the police had arrested him as a result of his refusal to leave the camp. Because there has been little follow-up media reportage after the eviction, Maurice said that he had spent only one day in the police station and without any kind of investigation the police decided they did not have enough reason to detain him.

Some of the local homeless organizations have offered him a position as a manager or even a director with a high salary and full benefits, but he has preferred to continue his “activism” and to use the moment of eviction as leverage to try to pass the Homeless Bill of Rights in Indiana. He believes that this effort will change the way people see and treat the homeless, and will encourage them to see the homeless as having the same rights as other “normal” people. This includes simple things, such restoring his homeless friend Michael’s right to use computers in the IUPUI Campus Library. In doing so, he has been reaching out to some of the local agencies, organizing resources, and building relationships with some of the “key actors” who can help extend his voice and movement.

Moreover, because he believes that if we go to downtown Indianapolis and ask people who are not homeless a simple question, such as “Hey, where can homeless people go for help that will get them off the streets?” the majority of people will reply that “They can go to the Wheeler Mission, Horizon House, or Good News Ministries and get some help.” One of his biggest dreams is for the city to provide what he calls a “24-hour

homeless resource center” that he can organize with people who have experienced homelessness in Indianapolis and who would therefore know exactly where people should go for help.

In order to keep his dreams and imagination alive, he puts a picture, a “prototype” of the homeless resource center building (figure 4.5) on the right side of his computer screen at the IUPUI Library where he usually works. Every day, and every time he finishes something, whether meetings, presentations, discussions, outreach activities, giving talks, or occasionally just sitting in the library building, he always takes time to look at that picture.



## Indianapolis resource center

The home for the homeless!

Figure 4.5 A prototype of Maurice’s 24-hour Integrated Homeless Resource Center in Indianapolis (Photo by Maurice’s friend 2014)

One day I asked him, “Do you put this picture up so that you can see it here every day? And he replied, while he strokes his long beard almost every time I meet him,

“Yes...yes...I am very excited about it!” When he looked at the kitchen in the lower floor of the IUPUI Library, which is a room for the IUPUI Honors College, he told me that the kitchen also inspired him to have the same thing in the homeless resource center, equipped with all appliances, since although many homeless people have a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) card to buy food, they cannot cook, because they do not have access to a kitchen.

He thinks this dream could be realized by using one of the abandoned school buildings in Indianapolis. In his opinion, an abandoned school building provides the ideal infrastructure to start what he calls “transitional housing” which would serve the needs of homeless people before they can solve their own problems. In every school building there is always gym that can be used as a day room, restrooms, showers, lockers, a cafeteria, a principal’s office for administrative offices, and classrooms that can be used by the service providers like CHIP, HIP, Horizon House, and other agencies. Putting together the supply and demand side under one roof will save money, and provide the resources necessary for an effective and efficient strategy toward the goal of ending homelessness. This idea, he believes, has not yet been implemented in other cities but the mayor of Indianapolis, the business community, and everybody else in the city would benefit equally by applying this model. In July 2014, a couple of days before I went back to Indonesia, Maurice sent me a message saying that an organization has given him a house (figure 4.6) to be used as his next “pilot project” for the homeless resource center. He said:

“I wish we had more time because the folks from [Indiana University] Bloomington are coming up August 1 to discuss HBR [Homeless Bill of Rights]. Dr Byers I believe is the author of the university books for the Social Work program (BSW). Maybe we could get Dr Z [Larry J. Zimmerman] to stop by the meeting? Also, an organization has given us a 9,000 square foot house to remodel. I believe we can make 10-12 rooms. These beds will be for the homeless that where hurt

during the winter. So, [for] those who [have] lost a leg or foot or toes. Or those with physical disabilities and leaving the hospitals with conditions that make it to hard for them to live on the streets.”

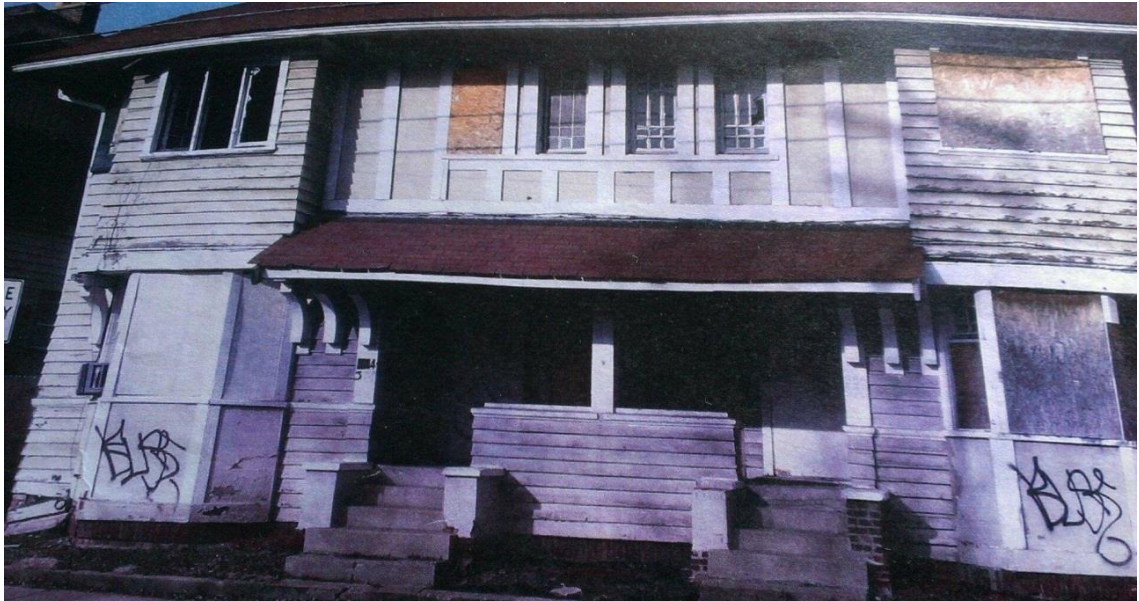


Figure 4.6 A house given to Maurice for free, located at 522 E Wabash and to be used as a temporary homeless resource center (photo by Maurice 2014)

As an intellectual homeless man, his current activism now is focused on redesigning the ways that basic needs, especially food, are provided to the homeless. He can no longer pull the resources and the service providers together in one place since the closure of the Irish Homeless camp, a place he considered to be the first “pilot project” for the “24 hour homeless resource center”. He has also worked to build a connection to the campus community in order to get support and awareness from the academic environment, especially because his movement was initiated and organized in the IUPUI Campus Library.

#### **4.4. Meeting Basic Needs: Comparing the IUPUI Library to the Central Library**

In dealing with the daily basic needs of homeless people, during the six months since the eviction, Maurice has been able to organize some churches and agencies to come to the IUPUI Campus Library to provide food for homeless people who come there almost



every day, including those who usually stay in the Central Library, but who come to the university library only for the food. He uses the IUPUI Campus Library as his “office” to organize everything he plans. Compared to the Central Library, using the campus library provides Maurice with several advantages.

The first is location and time. The IUPUI Library is closer to Military Park where he and others I call “homeless intellectuals” stay during the night than it is to the Central Library. They have to leave Military Park at 6:30 a.m. every day and the IUPUI Campus Library opens at 7:30 a.m. and closes at 9:00 p.m. during the weekdays and 6:00 p.m. during the weekend, but during the school semester the campus is open until midnight. On the other hand, the Central Library has a daily schedule from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekdays and Noon to 5:00 p.m. for weekend hours.

The second reason is that the IUPUI Library has fewer rules for visitors. Everybody who has a student ID card, as Maurice does, can use computer and internet facilities for free without restrictions on time of use. The Central Library, on the other hand, applies certain automatic restrictions for the length of computer usage. Maurice and his friends can use computers in the campus library as long as they want to, from its opening until closing time. If they are not students, they can use the computers for a daily charge of \$1.00. Maurice is currently advocating for getting a \$1.00 charge for one week instead of each day because it is still too expensive for the homeless to spend \$30.00 per month for the internet. There is no restriction on taking naps in the campus library, which is one of the most important things for the homeless due to the lack of sleeping time when they are on the street, city parks, campsites, or even in the shelters. Their appearance in the

campus library will also not be supervised or monitored by security guards, unlike in the Central Library.

The third advantage is that the IUPUI Campus Library has somewhat better facilities. Many computers are always vacant and they can use them without having to queue up at any time when they come. Almost every homeless person both in the Central Library and campus library has a Facebook account, so computers with internet access have become essential facilities they use daily. The IUPUI Campus Library also has some good-quality couches on every level of the five-story building, two microwaves located on first floor, several vending machines in some strategic spots, a cafeteria on the lower floor, TV rooms and sofas on the second floor, and more restrooms than in the Central Library. It is also close to the Natatorium with its olympic swimming pool and the IUPUI sports complex which have shower facilities that they can use at any time during the day. When they need more TV Channels (figure 4.7) to watch, some of the homeless people also go to the Campus Center located just a short distance from the library.



Figure 4.7 TV Lounge at the IUPUI Campus Center, where at least one or two homeless people watch their favorite TV shows every day (Photo by Karim 2014)



The fourth advantage is access to food. Maurice has been able to ask some of the agencies to have their feeding program (figure 4.8) at the IUPUI Campus Library where there are now three lunches scheduled a week served by different agencies for around 9-12 homeless people who regularly come to the library. On Saturday this number increases to 15-20. Maurice always put himself last in line to make sure that everybody gets their own meal, so sometimes he gets nothing except a glass of water. A couple of minutes prior to the arrival of the food, he also does a routine “inspection” on the third and fourth floors where the homeless people are, because some of them may be sleeping when the food arrives; when this is the case, Maurice wakes them up.



Figure 4.8 Feeding day for the homeless in front of the lobby of BS building, very close to the main entrance to the IUPUI Campus Library (Photos by Karim 2014)

Maurice says that homeless people in the IUPUI Campus Library are easier to manage than those who are in the Central Library because most have jobs, and they do not go the shelters, do not drink alcohol or use drugs, and they have no criminal backgrounds. Some of them, especially who move back and forth between the Central Library and the campus library, may have some degree of mental illness but they have never caused problems, at least during the last two years since they have been there. In order to keep the library building clean and avoid a crowded situation that can result in a ban from coming

to the library, the feeding program is usually held in the lobby corridor of the Kelly School of Business just on the right side of the elevator. This is a kind of an “underground” movement because in the city, people or agencies cannot feed the homeless in public spaces without having a permit from the city and the only agency that has one is the Pour House. Other than this campus library feeding program, Maurice has made a list of food resources where the homeless can go to get their free food, but some of these agencies are quite a distance away (see table 4.1).

**Table 4.1 The List of Feedings provided by Different Agencies**

<b>Service Providers</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Tues</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>Thu</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>Sat</b>	<b>Sun</b>
Cathedral Kitchen	B, D	B	B	B	B	L	L
Wheeler Mission for Men	L, D	L, D	L, D	L, D	L, D	L, D	D
Wheeler Mission for Women	L,D	L, D	L, D	L, D	L, D	L, D	D
Martin Luther King Center	L	L	L	L	L		
Tabernacle Presbyterian Church	L		L		L		
Fletcher Place Community Center		B	D	B	B		
Bethesda Baptist Church	D						
Homeless and ReEntry Helpers	D			D	D	D	H
Scott and Peggy		D					
Westminster Neighborhood				L			
Robert Park United Methodist						B	L

Notes: B=Breakfast; L=Lunch; D=Dinner (Resource: Maurice’s Notes 2014)

#### **4.5. The Indiana Homeless Bill of Rights**

As someone who has acquired some level of legal expertise, something he thought was important for building his relationship with the campus community, Maurice has now developed a relationship with Dr. Mary Provence. This began after the eviction from the Irish Hill camp, when he was invited to give a presentation to a Social Work class taught by Dr. Provence (figure 4.5). Since then, this collaboration has allowed Maurice to connect to broader academic networks in the Indiana University system and other academic institutions in Indianapolis. He was also invited by Dr. Shelly Landis (Dr. Provence’s

neighbor, in the front row with the purple sweater in figure 4.9) who teaches the class on Community Organizations at Indiana University School of Social Work.

Maurice met Dr. Provence for the first time in 2012 at an event coordinated by Rebuilding the Wall (RtW), a non-profit and faith-based community organization initiated by Dr. Provence and her husband Chris. Located at Guilford Avenue, Indianapolis, RtW was established in 2001 and focuses on providing the opportunity for homeownership through the renovation of vacant inner city properties for low income families in Indianapolis. All of the board members and the core staff members of this organization are community residents who live within a small area northeast of downtown.



Figure 4.9 Dr. Mary Provence (pointed) and her neighbors, board members of *Rebuilding the Wall, Inc.* (Photo credit *rebuildingthewall.org*)

Both Dr. Provence and Maurice share the same viewpoint on the problem of homelessness. As Dr. Provence argues:

“You know, I spent 4 years on the street with the outreach team and I love every section of it, and now I still interact with the homeless population at my house...It’s because so few people are engaging in the community and knowledgeable in this kind of issue. Most of the social workers are now working in other mental health help settings, like hospitals, schools, that kind of thing. That’s

valuable and important, but there just not many people who are capable of teaching an authentic knowledge about this topic.”

In the same context, Maurice added:

“I think the reason why there are so many social workers now doing mental health [work] and stuff like that [is] because the law dictates their work. The key is, there are some characteristics, in the business setting, when it’s project oriented, the HIP for example, for the social workers. It becomes so diplomatic”.

Dr. Provence’s experience gave her a foundation to bring social work to its core business. As she said:

“...I want to make a key point. If you are in the field of the social work to get a job, then you need to get out, because social worker is not a job, it’s a calling and a commitment to justice. That means that if you do that for free, then you do that for free. People [social workers] who are making for 50-60 thousand dollars a year as a social worker, the resources are from the poor, and there’s an issue!”

As a result of positive responses from the students and the need for understanding the current social issues in Indianapolis, Dr. Provence continued her collaboration with Maurice for another class in Spring 2014, especially because she was interested in knowing what Maurice had done at the Irish Hill homeless camp and about his goals in fighting for the rights of the homeless. As she said,

“When I invited Maurice to come speak this semester, I had no intention of like jumping on the bench and telling the students about what bill to follow. We had a difficult time making a decision, because they had to choose a bill and they had to to create what I called a ‘change product.” We had a whole bunch of plans and they just could not pick up a bill they could agree on. I gave them a lot of flexibility on what they could do, and then I let Maurice come and somebody raised her hand and asking, can we do that? They discussed it and said they would like to do that, so I just rearranged the syllabus a little bit. I think at first, there was just a question of how to integrate the idea of Maurice as a homeless man and Maurice as highly educated person. I think it took a minute. Do we feel sorry for him, or do we like to learn from him? You know what? I think they finally got it: we learn from him.”

Throughout the spring semester, Maurice has worked with Dr. Provence and her students in the Social Welfare and Practice class to build and organize resources for

passing the Indiana Homeless Bill of Rights. Through this effort, Maurice also proposed that the 26th of August (the day of eviction of the Irish Hill) be commemorated as a “Homeless Awareness Day.” For Dr. Provence, the idea of collaboration with Maurice cannot be separated from her background as a social activist who used to go to the streets as an outreach worker for homeless people and low-income families. Inspired by a book titled *the Anatomy of Peace* by the Arbing Institute (2006) that she uses in every class she teaches, she found that social problems are rooted in the way people see other people, regardless of the social and economic status they have in society. For her, this book is very relevant for addressing the issue of homelessness from the perspective of social work.

This book is just astounding and it’s useful in any level in social work because it teaches its idea that people are people. But when we have conflict, it is because we are usually viewing the other person as someone who’s in our way. They are obstacles, or they are vehicles. Somebody can use them until we get what we want. We are far from way of that relevance and don’t even acknowledge their existence. All human complexes come down to that. We also have the service providers that sometimes use them as a vehicle to get a pay check, and that’s a problem. For me, social workers whether in mico, meso, or macro level need to fundamentally understand that and make sure that they have a heart of peace and I told my students that from the beginning. Since Maurice has been in my entire class, I needed to say something to them in private. He is not a vehicle for you to feel good about, he is a human being, he is a person that you need to learn, and I think they’ve got it”

Through the engagement with the community in the Rebuilding the Wall program and her other works on social issues such as serving as a therapist in the Integrative Health Resources clinic, she found that the collaboration with Maurice gave her class a broader insight for understanding the real social issues in facing the homeless community.

The students from the class then created the Facebook (figure 4.10) page named *Indiana Homeless Bill of Rights* as one of the social media strategies to raise awareness of this issue among social media users. On the IUPUI campus, they also scheduled some

informational meetings and presentations to spread the idea of the homeless bill of rights and to get support from the academic community. Luckily, my interview with Maurice was conducted on the day of the initial meeting at her office with Dr. Carolyn Gentle-Genitty, the director of Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program with Maurice and the student representative from Dr. Provence's class in order to get advice on what would they planned to do throughout the spring semester. At that time they had created a brochure about the problem that homelessness has been criminalized, rather than being seen as a social issue.

Mary Provence from IUPUI & Rebuilding the Wall, "Our class has partnered with Homeless Advocate, Maurice Young, in his fight to decriminalize homelessness through the Indiana Homeless Bill of Rights. We are supporting him as he works on getting a bill before the Indiana General Assembly for 2015. Did you know that if a homeless neighbor goes into a restaurant with money to pay that they are often offered a small discount if they will take their food and leave? Did you know that it is now illegal to serve food to homeless neighbors in many of our downtown open areas? This is wrong! Stand up with us as we fight for our homeless neighbors to have the rights our Constitution already gives to them but are being denied by local officials!

Figure 4.10 The Facebook page of the Indiana Homeless Bill of Rights with its description  
(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/INhomelessbillofrights>)

Following this meeting, they scheduled three additional informational meetings on campus located at the IUPUI Social Work Commons on the fourth floor of the School of Social Work building. The first, FYI (for your information)-Meeting meeting was held on March 3, 2014, attended by students, and some faculty members from the School of Social Work. At this session, Maurice and the students introduced their project and distributed the brochure on the Indiana Homeless Bill of Rights. The second meeting was on March 6<sup>th</sup> and focused more on presenting and discussing the action plan, possible obstacles, and the route to pass the bill. The third meeting was held on April 24<sup>th</sup> where the students also presented their final projects.

Since beginning this collaboration with Dr. Provence and her students, Maurice has been invited to give talks about homelessness in different places outside the IUPUI campus throughout the semester, such as in churches, coffee houses, on the local National Public Radio affiliate, and at the University of Indianapolis. The main theme of his presentation is bringing back homelessness as a social issue, rather than seeing it as a criminal justice issue-that violates people's rights. For example, the currently does not allow people to feed others, eat, or stay in the park. He used a concept of "the criminalization of homelessness" from the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP 2009) referring to the measures which prohibit life-sustaining activities such as sleeping or camping, eating, sitting, and or asking for money or resources in public spaces, and include criminal penalties for violations of these acts. In illustrating what he called the criminalization of homelessness, he referred to several U.S. laws including:

- 1st Amendment protection of free speech – law enforcement restricting speech like begging targets speech based on content, or do not allow for alternative channels of communication;
- 4th Amendment protection from unreasonable search and seizure – law enforcement is allowed to destroy a homeless person's belongings;
- 8th Amendment protection from cruel and unusual punishment – Imposing criminal penalties for engaging in necessary life activities;
- 14th Amendment protection for citizenship, due process, and equal protection – vague statutes that do not give a person notice of prohibited conduct and encourage arbitrary enforcement.

In every speech, Maurice concludes his presentation by requesting better approaches and more tangible solutions from the state and city in solving the problem of homelessness. According to Maurice, due to the fact that there is no state or city budget allocated to solve the problem of homelessness, the Indiana Homeless Bill of Rights can be used as a powerful tool to enforce some of the main issues:

- Protection against segregation, laws targeting homeless people for their lack of housing and not their behavior, and restrictions on the use of public space;
- Granting privacy and enforcing property protections;
- Allowing the homeless the opportunity to vote and feel safe in their community without fear or harassment;
- Providing broad access to shelter, social services, legal counsel and quality education for the children of homeless families.



For Dr. Provence, this effort is important both for the homeless to have better treatment from society and for the students who will become the future policy makers. She said:

“I don’t think that my class is gonna be there on the day that the Homeless Bill of Rights is passed, so one thing in my mind was just breaking the wall. What I kind of envisioned for this semester was to help promote self-awareness, and I wanted them to really focus on this kind of code of action. What I had envisioned then was that I wanted them to actually have a kind of map of the state, keep tracking how many people from each county we are getting, are those people in those counties contacting their legislators, and those kinds of things...”

#### **4.6. Dave “The Mentor”**

David or Dave, as his friends used to call him, is an African American homeless man who was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1955. He moved to Lafayette in his early childhood until he graduated from Purdue University and holds a 1978 bachelor’s degree in education and supervision management. Since then he taught the third grade and ran a business of a couple of liquor stores. In 2004, his wife passed away. They had been married for 18 years and had no children. For him, this event was really emotionally disruptive and it led him to “give up” on his life, including using his wife’s death as an excuse to start using cocaine for a while, even though one of his brothers had passed away as a result of substance abuse. He gave away all of his material wealth including his new house, cars, the liquor stores, and other belongings to his brothers and sisters a year and a half before he became addicted to cocaine. As he tells the story,

“... [T]he day after signing over a paper to my attorney and giving them my house and everything I have, I left from there totally free...I wanted to take myself out and I don’t care about anything anymore...It was just my intention to take myself out because I wouldn’t be tough enough to do the knife thing or gun or hanging...”

He lost not only his wife, but he had also given away everything else that made for a “decent life” so he ended up homeless. Since then he has been living unhoused in in and

out of Military Park for more than four years, depending on his financial situation. For example, eight months after becoming homeless, he got a job, so he could move to an apartment for a couple of months. But when he lost his job, living outside became a choice that could not be avoided. Even though he has five brothers and four sisters who are fully employed and have stable finances, he has chosen to live with the consequences of his own actions. As he lamented:

“...[F]or me, I just never tapped on their door and asked for their help. I brought this burden; I made this poor choice when it never had to be.”

What he considered as fortunate during his struggle with cocaine addiction was his closeness with the Bible and the church, as a result of living and growing up in a religious family, which helped him overcome this hardship. Being homeless makes him learn from what he has done. As he said:

“...God let me do all that stuff...I woke up in the morning, I’ve spent a couple of thousand dollars, ...I’ve seen some guys, viewed girls, and it took my God to see it. ‘I gave you free will, but I never gave you the right to use your pain and your loss to abuse somebody else, and I never gave you the right to take my fortune as wondering the way you are.,’ And Hallelujah! I walked away from that house at that morning, no more substance abuse; I’ve never drunk alcohol, wine, beers, no pills, even till this day....no drugs...no drugs...”

What makes him different from many other homeless people in Indianapolis is the way he manages his life and his activism to help other homeless people. As with Michael, since he has become homeless, he has never been living on the street or in the homeless camp because of what he considered safety reasons. The main reason why Military Park has become his “night home” is simply for safety, as it is located directly across from the government offices and close to the state police office. He comes into both the Central Library and IUPUI Campus Library during the day when he has nothing to do with his teaching jobs or other appointments he has. In the Central Library, his favorite spot is in

the corner of the fourth floor where the Indianapolis Star Newspaper is available, so that he always has up-to-date information about current events around Indianapolis, the country, and the global news.

His knowledge about the homeless shelters' system in Indianapolis was gained from his experience living in some of these facilities. He experienced living at the Salvation Army, in an evangelical institution and for two weeks, at a part of the universal Christian church that helps people with addictions. He also stayed at the Goodnews Ministries for a week, and at the Wheeler Mission for a couple of days in the beginning of his homelessness. These experiences have led him to know how these three biggest missions work in Indianapolis.

He met Maurice for the first time at Military Park, and he is the one who initially influenced Maurice's activism to "advocate" for better treatment and rights for the homeless. He left all of his "homeless belongings" for Maurice when he got a job and an apartment to stay in. They work together to compile any resources that can be utilized by the homeless. He said that there is always a mentoring process from "those who are outside and new to the world of homelessness". Although he and Maurice take different approaches, in many cases they cooperate to support one another. For example, because he has served for church (as a preacher) for a long time, combined with his connection to some of the service providers, it is easy for him to get blankets, mats, shoes or whatever Maurice needs for homeless people. When Maurice had started building a homeless community on the Irish Hill homeless camp, Dave had gained full time employment and had enough income to rent an apartment. Six months later, as a result of the economic

downturn and the downsizing of businesses, he became unemployed and moved back to Military Park.

Dave differs from Maurice because he is more focused on helping homeless individuals to help themselves. Being homeless for him does not mean that he or other homeless people are free from personal responsibilities and that they should blame others who are outside of their control and authority. He teaches homeless people to have respect for others when they are seeking to get the same treatment whether it is from other homeless people or from society. His perspective about homelessness refers to his personal experience. As he said:

“My connotation to homeless is someone who has a stage of unemployment or not consistent employment, someone who might be fighting with some forms of addiction, but definitely if either the first reason or the second one or both the two are true, for sure, it’s a poor choice”, having to deal with the homelessness. They did not seize the right opportunity; they did not make the right choice.”

Dave argues against the commonplace understanding that homelessness is mostly a result of mental illnesses. Homelessness and mental illnesses are two different things. As he contends:

“My connotation for mental illness is someone who is no longer able to make logical choices,” but many homeless people can and still do make logical choices.”

His physical appearance is different from that of other homeless people because he consistently cares about his body hygiene and cleanliness. In doing so he always encourages other homeless people to clean up their body on a regular basis using a method he called “bird bathing”. Dave believes that every homeless person can do this whether in the Central Library, the IUPUI Campus Library, or other public restrooms in the very early morning when the bathrooms have not yet been visited by regular users. He wonders if every homeless person could learn the “good” daily routines of being homeless, whether

he or she would still offend the library officers and would be considered unpleasant by society. Many homeless people are banned from using restrooms in some restaurants in downtown simply because they just come in for that purpose and are disrespectful. To be homeless, as he argues, individuals should be able to “leave no evidence that they were present.” The key adaptation of people when they become homeless is following the “street rules.” As he said,

“Before you start speaking, know your audience. Before you start ‘bird bathing,’ know your surroundings! Many of the homeless become careless and become their own enemy.”

In a way, he criticizes Maurice’s activism suggesting that Maurice encourages many homeless people to rely or depend on his work. He refuses to give homeless people a handout without some form of accountability, because he also refuses to receive a handout in the same way. He argues that Maurice does not want to see that many homeless people should have control over their own lives. For example, the way Maurice organizes the agencies to provide food in the IUPUI Campus Library has led the homeless to become less productive because many of them spend almost the whole day inside the library building engaging in watching movies, playing games, or sleeping while they are waiting for food from the churches or other agencies.

Another example—and this is what he usually does—is if he needs a bus pass, he would go straight to get it from the service provider, and he would give it back at the end of the week when he gets money from his job. Another thing, for him, is that it is not proper for the homeless to show up every day, or ten hours a day, in the library just because they enjoy the facilities. They have to understand that they have a responsibility as well as an ability and accountability to give back to the private sector or whatever they can

do “to pass the time doing what God wants to do for the kingdom.” He always refers other homeless people who need help to various resources available, but at the same time, he also encourages them to aid themselves. As a consequence, he admitted that some homeless people are unhappy to meet him, and in his many discussions with Maurice, there were always exciting debates and almost even fights.

He categorizes homeless people into two different groups, namely the “mentally ill,” who really need intensive medical and psychological support, and the “mentally lazy,” who should take more responsibility for themselves. He believes that everybody has a skill to “prepare an umbrella for a rainy day” as he puts it. Another of his beliefs is, “don’t put all of your eggs in one basket” meaning that not having better stewardship over their daily, weekly, or monthly pay check is the main reason why people become homeless. He also agreed that a large percentage of homeless people in the Central Library need daily medication. However, many of the service providers do not really address the root problem of homelessness. As he argued:

“I don’t see a lot of them truly helping someone; they really become a source to enable someone for substance abuse...but they are coming there because they provide food, facilities, clothing, and bus passes....In many cases, they utilize the homeless for labor, so they got paid, and the homeless got paid. It’s, for me, really legalized ‘slave labor’, because the truth is, even at minimum wage, if they feed that person three meals, provide them a bed, allow them to take a shower, and if they give them a minimum wage, the homeless could have done the same thing for themselves outside.”

He is now doing substitutional teaching at one of the Indiana Public Schools (IPS) two days a week for his survival. He still receives a pension from his previous job, and is applying for several jobs including a full time teaching position, waiting for his application for Food Stamps for other options in order to become what he calls a “good citizen.” What he has been struggling with as his greatest challenge to overcome in his life is not the

homelessness, but his lack of desire to go back to a situation in a full time classroom that he associates with the loss of his wife and with what he calls a “good time” with his family and with the prosperity he once had. Moreover, he has become really concerned about his “quality of life.” He argues that:

“I rushed with earning the dollars, but I want to make sure when I earn that dollar that I’ll do it for what God says, helping the interest of others better than handling your own, not for stuff that later you gave away....My kingdom is for that purpose.”

I considered all of those examples of homeless activism that people from different backgrounds and for different reasons or concerns have cultivated, especially in the ways that they engage in helping other homeless people. Carrying out this study was a kind of eye-opener for me for understanding the “American way of life.” I still remember when I first came to the United States, and I was observing the homeless’ routines and habits on the streets. I wondered, “who are these people?”, and “why do they do something like that?” I realized that those questions are the anthropologists’ “core business” that they—including myself—should try to find reliable answers and develop explanations based on ethnographic fieldwork.

Furthermore, the answers and explanations are not only about “them” because I found that some parts of the stories are only “reflections” about “me” as an anthropologist, but also about “us” as a society. In this context, Laura Nader’s (2011) concept of *Ethnography as Theory* can also be used as what I call “nutrition” for thought. Nader (2011: 214) explains that according to old-fashioned anthropology, “ethnography is about the other, not the other intertwined with their conquerors, not about us and them;” this approach is no longer relevant to the study of the current interconnected world, because we are now facing a situation where anthropology is about “us.” Studying homeless activism

tells us a lot about our own lack of awareness of the social issues and problems that surround us.



## **Chapter 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1. Conclusion**

As neoliberalism becomes the order of almost every single pulse of a city's life, public spaces are quickly becoming merely a "piece of pie" in the politics of privatization (Mitchell 1995). As a result, with few exceptions, homeless voices have been absent from the discourse concerning their presence in public libraries (Valado 2006). The presence of a large but somewhat invisible number of homeless people in the public library, as well as in the university library, is only one of the unavoidable impacts of neoliberalism that has a long history and correlation with the homeless sheltering industry. Their presence in Indianapolis libraries specifically is a consequence of the eviction of the Irish Hill homeless camp in Indianapolis, but also a reflection of neoliberal downtown development policies, along with the widespread adoption of "anti-homeless" rules and policies. Surprisingly, even though the Indiana Bill of Rights, Section No. 6 says that there is "No state money for religious institutions: No money shall be drawn from the treasury, for benefit of any religious or theological institutions," the homeless shelters in Indianapolis are mostly operated by religious institutions, receiving and spending millions of public and private dollars every year, while only a small number of homeless people are housed.

If the main goal of the city, service providers, and any related agencies is moving the homeless out of the streets and out from under the bridges, and if both the "housing first" and the shelter first policies are incapable of housing them, then it remains a challenge for policy makers and other related parties to redesign the agenda of ending homelessness. I would not argue that all of the efforts that have been undertaken to date to address and to solve the problems of homelessness are necessarily wrong, but we can at

least ponder the current level of homeless activism as an authentic critique that has emerged from the grassroots to see that there is something wrong with these efforts that needs to be fixed.

I found that for a long period of time, there was a commonly believed consensus manifested in many levels of policies and programs for ending homelessness, which says that homeless people are just passive clients in need of help and support. It is true to say that they need such assistance but my study of homeless activism tells us that they also can be active agents who have ideas, values, and a “culture” that can be used as a new stepping stone to solve the problems of homelessness. The bans or restrictions that prevent homeless people from living under street bridges and in other public spaces, along with the hardships of shelter living, have forced homeless people to be resourceful in finding alternative forms of housing, like the libraries. This ethnographic study has shown how these spaces have given rise to forms of homeless activism that demonstrate how dynamic the lives of homeless people can be.

Based on my ethnographic investigation, I now understand why one of my informants, a security guard in the Central Library called the homeless people “zombies”. They are smelly and in many cases I developed a coughing spell when I started to talk with them. They can seem delusional, sick, and “strange” because they are constantly living in fear and uncertainty of not knowing where they are going to sleep during the night and what food they are going to eat during the day. They may be sleepy because they slept poorly or did not sleep at all. They act like zombies because they have been conditioned and treated like zombies in whatever spaces they find to live. For a significant number of homeless people, dealing with mental health issues, substance abuse, and alcohol addiction

is a chronic situation that cannot be solved solely by housing programs or criminal justice approaches. They may even face worse situations, like being sent to prison, when their presence on the street, city parks, university buildings, malls, and other public spaces is regarded as undesirable and their voices in the shelter systems and in decision-making about issues of homelessness are inaudible. For most, living on the street is not their choice. Rather, it is an impact of undeniably complex socio-economic and political processes and activities that adapt Herbert Spencer's concept of "survival-of-the-fittest", where the rich and the powerful have more privilege to expand their leverage but the poor have few choices to survive and therefore are left to die on the street. Through ethnography of "wait a minute," all of those issues gave me a new understanding of who they are and why the homeless exist.

Homeless activism as practiced by Maurice, Michael, and Dave, also serves as a satire of as well as a "swat" at the service providers, the agencies, and the government who have authority to manage resources and to reach out to local agencies in pursuing the goal of ending homelessness. The Central Library and the IUPUI Library bear no guilt if they are not following the mission and the struggle to reach out to local agencies. However, the ways the Central Library collaborates with other related organizations to tackle the issue of homelessness and to provide both intended and unintended services to the homeless are crucial to keeping the public library public.

Moreover, the concept of "extending our reach" initiated by the American Library Association can also be used as an alternative to move beyond "business as usual" efforts and existing "pseudo-cooperation" run by a wide array of organizations that purport help homeless people. The fact that both the public library and the university library cannot be

eliminated from discussions of homelessness suggests that now is the right time for these institutions to play more important roles by becoming active agents to help contribute to the goal of ending homelessness. For many reasons, libraries are considered as the only safe and reliable spaces where the homeless can organize themselves, to escape from fear and harassment, and to keep what Maurice calls their “self-actualization.” They can be used as a starting point to change the narratives—the perceptions, stereotypes, and predominant discourses—and treatments—including a wide range of social, medical, psychological, economic, cultural, and spiritual approaches—as well as the policies—management, rules, and laws—about homelessness.

What I am sure of and what I have learned about homeless activism, especially in the case of Maurice, is that he is not fighting for his organization, for his groups, for his family, or even for himself. Instead, he is fighting against injustice, rules, structural violence, and the criminalization of homelessness that hinder people from access to their rights. I call his activism to advocate homeless people’s rights using IUPUI Library as his office, as the longest office job in the world. He works from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m., seven days a week, an extraordinary job than can be done only by an extraordinary person. As Maurice said, he and other homeless people can survive without agencies that claim to have a goal to end homelessness, but those agencies cannot survive without the homeless. Their funding, their beds, their meal services, and the lives of their employees always depend on the number of homeless people they serve. But more importantly, if the churches, the faith-based agencies, and people feel sorry, for the homeless, and always have an initiative intended to help the homeless, then why do they let people stay outside

and slowly die on the street? As Maurice said, “Jesus was homeless; can you live in His home while you neglect people who live like Jesus?”

As a graduate student representing an academic community, I was also struck by one of Maurice’s arguments, one day, when he said:

“...Karim, let me show you this, this [a power point presentation] of a social work project from three master students in [the] IU Social Work Department, meaning that they are about to come up to become professional social workers that they asked me to look at and give comments on. Everything in this [the power point presentation] we’ve talked, we’ve talked, and we’ve talked, and then they incorporated something that I haven’t seen. They mixed it with things [academic references] here. This is not good, this model [some approaches to end homelessness], this is crazy...it’s because they listen to these things [academic references about homelessness by scholars who have never experience homelessness], this situation, these people, from Harvard, from Yale, and all of these things, they believe and trust in who were wrong. This is the problem in this country; everybody is complaining about the homeless problem that the homeless people are not listening. You have people who are writing about it, studying about it, speaking about it, who have no clue what that really is. I’ve got to review this, I mean this is horrible, this is nothing...”

Policy captures the big picture, but ethnography portrays a unique case. The eviction of the Irish Hill homeless camp opened the door for a critical starting point of the homeless movement and of the resulting activism that was coordinated and organized from inside a university library building in Indianapolis. As documented by Kyla Martin in her documentary film about Maurice Young and Homelessness in Indianapolis, a short documentary that has won several national and international awards, homeless activism emerging from library buildings can help educate people to understand the issue of homelessness in the United States from the perspective of the homeless.

Another interesting issue is an “engagement” of two different scholars in different ways. On one hand, Dr. Jennifer N. Rice and Dr. Laura Littlepage (the IU Public Policy Institute) who author the Homeless Point-in-Time Count, serve on behalf of the service

providers (coordinated by CHIP), and they have contributed to the development of wide ranging homeless programs (the shelter-first or housing-first policy) run by CHIP in Indianapolis. On the other side, Dr. Mary Provence, collaborates with and supports the homeless activism that opposes the shelter-first or housing-first policy. If all of these actors could walk in the same direction or at least reach an agreement on how to help homeless people in a more effective way—because I do believe that they have a similar goal—their role and their engagement addressing social problems would be a model of what Davis (2003) calls “pracademicians,” that is, academics who contribute to addressing practical problems.

## **5.2. Specific Recommendations**

I believe that some specific recommendations can be derived from this project as follows, but that there certainly may be others to be derived if we can just change our perspectives and approaches even slightly:

- “Extending Our Reach” as a campaign introduced by the American Library Association (ALA) to encourage public libraries to become more engaged to the issue of homelessness can be used as an opportunity for public libraries to make more tangible efforts to help homeless people. Embedding social workers in libraries, as Joan Harvey has proposed, is an alternative strategy for providing more space and opportunity for the homeless to share their problems.
- The Indiana Homeless Bill of Rights as a legal instrument to change the structural violence and the criminalization of homelessness, as Maurice proposed, is also a part of larger effort to address the issue of homelessness in different ways. Real collaborations between the service providers, agencies, scholars, and all related

parties are urgently needed, including the homeless population in the process of planning, decision making, budgeting, and evaluating programs related to the issue of homelessness. The City of Indianapolis and the City Mayor can reap benefits from this point on, as a model of a homeless friendly city in one of the most conservative states in the United States, in ways that actually mesh with many elements of conservative agendas.

- The Department of Library and Information Science at IUPUI which is located at the library building where Maurice and other homeless people spend their whole day and use library's facilities has both undergraduate and graduate programs. More importantly, they have dual degree programs with the Department of History, Museum Studies, Philanthropic Studies, Health Informatics, Law, and Management, which are all related to social issues including homelessness. It would be more valuable and beneficial if they could develop curricula, programs, internships, and class projects in collaboration with homeless people and organizations that address issues of homelessness. Joan's idea of social workers in the library and Maurice's vision of a "homeless resource center" can be integrated with programs from the Department of Library and Information Sciences as an innovative model for ending homelessness.
- Lastly, the Point-in-Time Homeless Count is one of the best data sources available that can be accessed and utilized annually, can be compared across the states, and can be ascertained as to its "sustainability" because it is supported by federal funding (only required biennially by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development/HUD). However, it needs to be evaluated, especially in terms of the

timing of the count. The problem is that, the homeless count is usually conducted in January, which is during the winter, and does not represent the actual number of homeless people during the summer time.

### **5.3. Some Final Observations**

I looked at some of the American ways of ending homelessness through the lens of a non-American ethnographer. By doing so, combined with an extensive literature review about homelessness in the United States and any other resources I could tap into during my ethnographic fieldwork, I have learned that the complex issues about homelessness can be addressed only partially by only faith-based organizations and other institutions. I now believe that they must also be addressed by the homeless themselves, as well as by the government, and by communities. Homelessness is not “their” problem; it is “our” problem.

If I had not approached the homeless to tell their stories, even after I had failed many times, I would never have seen their activism and I would never have heard their narratives. I hope this scholarly project can help provide a broader perspective on the role of public and university libraries in dealing with homeless populations as well as raising public awareness of the problems of homelessness. My goal is also to help move us toward achieving policy changes that are friendlier to “marginalized populations.” More work needs to be done in this direction, new analyses need to be explored, and new ethnographies of homeless in utilizing indoor public spaces should be carefully written.



## **APPENDIX**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

#### **Homeless People**

1. Where are you from? What state?
2. How would you describe yourself?
3. How long have you been living in Indianapolis?
4. Do you have families? Where are they?
5. Do you have friends in Indianapolis and here in public library?
6. Where do you usually stay, get food and other necessities?
7. How about homeless shelters?
8. When did you come to public library for the first time? How did you get it?
9. How often do you come to public library?
10. What is your opinion about public library?
11. How long do you usually stay in public library?
12. Where are your favorite spot/floor/facilities in public library?
13. What specific services or programs do you engage in public library?
14. What benefits do you get from the library?
15. Do you have any thoughts or suggestion for library to help homelessness?
16. What agencies/organizations/public facilities other than public library do you usually use?
17. What is your planning for your future life?

#### **Indianapolis Marion County Public Library**

1. Where are you from?
2. How long have you been living in Indianapolis?
3. How long have you been working in the Public Library?
4. Do you have specific educational background or training certificate to work in library?
5. Could you please tell me about your jobs or responsibilities?
6. Based on your experiences, could you please share to me about interesting stories working in public library?
7. What do you know about homelessness in Indianapolis?
8. How about homeless people in public library? What kinds of homeless people do you know/see (gender, age, race/ethnic, physical appearances, stereotypes)
9. Any difference appearances between summer/winter or holiday/weekdays or morning/noon?
10. Do you know how many homeless people usually come to the library? Do you have a recording sheet/file, camera? What the differences 10-20 years ago and now?
11. Does library treats them differently? Does the library have specific services, rules, concerns about homelessness?
12. Tell me about specific programs from library addressing homeless people here in Indianapolis?

13. How any organizations working together with public library to address homeless population? Do you have regular meetings with them?
14. What roles you play in that programs?
15. What do you think about any other roles can be played by public libraries to help homelessness?
16. What do you think any policies or programs to end homelessness?
17. Do you agree with a notion: public library can be considered as a temporary home?

### **Service Providers**

1. Where are you from?
2. How long have you been living in Indianapolis?
3. How long have you been working in this organization?
4. Could you please tell me about your jobs or responsibilities?
5. Do you have specific educational background or training certificate to get a job in this agency or organization?
6. What kind of services does your agency provide for people experiencing homelessness?
7. How many individuals or population experiencing homelessness have you provided services in the past year?
8. What do you know about the issue of homelessness in Indianapolis (gender, race, ethnicity, age, stereotypes)?
9. Could you please tell me what kind of event or occurrence that drives you to work with homeless population?
10. What are the most common and critical challenges working with organization that help homeless people?
11. What do you think the main factors triggered people become homeless?
12. What is your opinion about programs addressing the problems of homelessness, specifically in public library?
13. How long have your agency been working with public library? How often you have meeting with them?
14. How often you have meeting or coordination with public library management?
15. What the different role between public library and other public facilities utilized by homeless people?
16. What policies, programs or activities do you think need to be continued or established to end homelessness?
17. Do you agree with a notion: public library can be considered as a “temporary shelter” for the homeless?
18. What do you think about the Homeless Count?

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# **CURRICULUM VITAE**

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- Master of Arts, Applied Anthropology, Indiana University, USA, 2014
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## **Honors and Awards**

- Ambassador's Award for Excellence (AAFE): "Promoting Academic Excellence of Indonesian Students." Educational and Cultural Attaché, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014
- Travel Grant for the 74th Annual Meeting of Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Graduate School IUPUI, 2014
- The Real Change Travel Grant for the RESULTS International Poverty Conference with Dr. Mohammad Yunus (Nobel Laureate) in Washington DC. RESULTS Educational Fund (REF), 2013
- Scholarship Program for Strengthening the Reforming Institution (SPIRIT). The World Bank-the Government of Indonesia, 2012
- The Best and the Fastest Graduate. Department of Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Cultural Science Gadjah Mada University, 2005
- Albert Ludwigs Universität Freiburg-UGM Student Exchange Program for Undergraduate Thesis Project in the City of Freiburg, Germany, 2005
- Academic Achievement Award and Scholarship. UGM, 2003-2005
- Bronze Medal of Tae Kwon Do Student Championship. UGM, 2003

## **Training Experiences**

- Pro-Poor Planning, Budgeting and Monitoring. Bappenas-UNDP-the World Bank and the Institute for Economic and Social Research (LPEM) the University of Indonesia, Jakarta, 2009 and 2011
- Social Protection. The Australian Aid (AUSAID), Jakarta, 2010
- Econometric Modelling. The Institute for Economic and Social Research (LPEM) the University of Indonesia, Jakarta, 2009
- Adept Poverty Analysis. The World Bank, Jakarta, 2009
- Special Management Skills, Advanced Thinking Skills, Self Determinating Character Building, Effective Coaching, Big Brother and Big Sister Program, and Leadership Attitude. DUE-Like Batch Project, UGM, 2004

## **Research Experiences**

- Monitoring and Evaluation of the National Program for Community Empowerment (PNPM Mandiri Project) in Indonesia, 2008-2011
- Governance and Decentralization Survey. The World Bank- the Center for Population and Policy Studies UGM, 2006
- Household Socio-Economic Survey (the Fuel Subsidy Reduction Compensation Fund/PKPS-BBM). The Center for Population and Policy Studies, UGM, 2003 and 2005

- Intercultural Mariages in Freiburg, Germany. Undergraduate Thesis, Department of Cultural Anthropology UGM, 2005
- Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in Indonesia. Student Tandem Research Project Department of Cultural Anthropology UGM and the University of Agder, Norway. Yogyakarta, 2005
- Culture and Natural Conservation: Student Ethnographic Project in Karimunjawa Islands. The Department of Cultural Anthropology UGM, 2004

### **Presentations**

- Panelist in the 74th Annual Meeting of Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA): "Seeing the West from the East: An Ethnographic Account of Homelessness in the Downtown Indianapolis." Albuquerque, New Mexico, March 21, 2014
- Presented "Poverty Experience in Indonesia" at the RESULTS Educational Fund (REF) International Conference and the Lobby Day with Congressmen and Representatives from Indiana at the Capitol Hill, Washington DC, July 20-24, 2013

### **Conferences Attended**

- Public Library Association (PLA) Annual Conference, Indianapolis, IN; 2014
- Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) Annual Meeting, Albuquerque, NM; 2014
- American Anthropological Association (AAA) Annual Conference, Chicago, IL; 2013
- The RESULTS Educational Fund (REF) Annual International Conference on Poverty, Washington DC; 2013

### **Publications**

- Karim. 2014. Seeing the West from the East: An Ethnographic Account of Homelessness in the Downtown Indianapolis. Albuquerque, New Mexico. (Abstract Annual Meeting of Society for Applied Anthropology /SfAA).
- Karim. 2014. "Belajar Kepemimpinan dari Kepala Suku Kaum Homeless di Ibu kota Balap Dunia" (Leadership Learning from the "mayor" of Homelessness Community in the City of the Racing Capital of the World). Etnohistori, August 2014.
- Karim. 2014. "Homeless, Isu Ras, dan Penjara di Amerika Serikat" (Homelessness, Race, and Jail in America). Etnohistori, February 2014.
- Karim. 2014. "Potret Gelandangan dan Pengemis di Amerika" (The Portrait of Homelessness in America). Etnohistori, January 2014.
- Karim. 2013. "Poverty; Homelessness and Urban Issues". Global Indy: Linking Central Indiana to the World, an Online Magazine. Available at <http://spea.provocate.org/archives/author/kakarim>.
- Karim, with F.E. Satria, D.K. Primasari, Vera Aniesatun, Karlina, and Sita Hidayah. 2006. Budaya Barat dalam Kacamata Timur: Pengalaman dan Hasil Penelitian Antropologis di Sebuah Kota di Jerman (Fieldwork and Ethnographic Experience in Germany). Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.